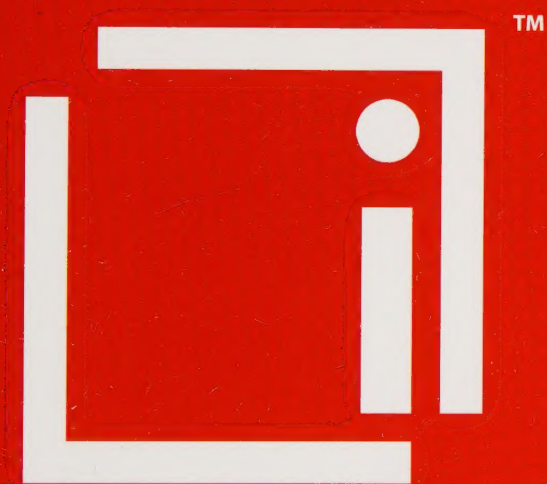
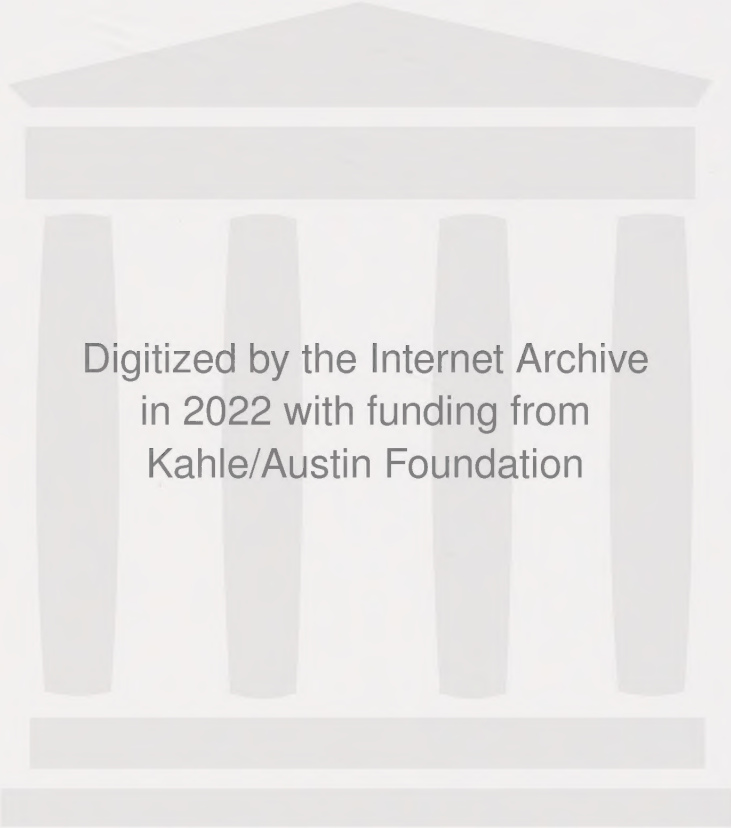


# DETERMINISM OR FREE WILL



CHAPMAN COHEN



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# Determinism

OR

# Free-Will?

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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## PREFACE TO NEW EDITION.

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THE demand for a new edition of *Determinism or Free-Will* is gratifying as affording evidence of the existence of a public, apart from the class catered for by more expensive publications, interested in philosophic questions (1). It was, indeed, in the conviction that such a public existed that the book was written. Capacity, in spite of a popular impression to the contrary, has no very close relation to cash, nor is interest in philosophic questions indicated solely by the ability to spend a half-guinea or guinea on a work that might well have been published at three or four shillings. There exists a fairly large public of sufficient capacity and education intelligently to discuss the deeper aspects of life, but which has neither time nor patience to give to the study of bulky works that so often leave a subject more obscure at the end than it was at the beginning.

Nor does there appear any adequate reason why it should be otherwise. A sane philosophy must base itself on the common things of life, and must

(1) When the Mss. of this work was submitted to a well-known firm of publishers, the reply came in the form of an offer to publish the work provided it could be expanded so as to admit of its publication at 7/6. It would have been quite easy to have done this; the difficulty is to compress, and the less a subject is understood the easier it is to write at length on it. But the offer, though financially tempting, would have defeated the purpose for which the work was written, and so was declined.

## PREFACE.

deal with the common experience of all men. The man who cannot find material for philosophic study by reflecting on those which are near at hand is not likely to achieve success by travelling all over the globe. He will only succeed in presenting to his readers a more elaborately acquired and a more expensively gained confusion. Nor is there any reason why philosophy should be discussed only in the jargon of the schools, except to keep it, like the religious mysteries, the property of the initiated few. We all talk philosophy, as we all talk prose, and doubtless many are as surprised as was M. Jourdain, when the fact is pointed out to them.

So whatever merit this little work has is chiefly due to the avoidance, so far as possible, of a stereotyped phraseology, and to the elimination of irrelevant matter that has gathered round the subject. The present writer has long had the conviction that the great need in the discussion of ethical and psychological questions is their restatement in the simplest possible terms. The most difficult thing that faces the newcomer to these questions is to find out what they are really all about. Writer follows writer, each apparently more concerned to discuss what others have said than to deal with a straightforward discussion of the subject itself. Imposing as this method may be, it is fatal to enlightenment. For the longer the discussion continues the farther away from the original question it seems to get. One has heard of "The Religion of Philosophy," and its acquisition of obscurity in thought and prolixity in language seems to have gone some distance towards earning the title.

## PREFACE.

Being neither anxious to parade the extent of my reading, nor greatly overawed by the large number of eminent men who have written on the subject, I decided that what was needed was a plain statement of the problem itself. My concern, therefore, has been to keep out all that has not a direct bearing on the essential question, and only to deal with other writers so far as a discussion of what they say may help to make plain the point at issue. If the result does not carry conviction it at least makes clear the ground of disagreement. And that is certainly something gained.

Moreover, there is a real need for a clearing away of all the verbal lumber that has been allowed to gather round subjects concerning which intelligent men and women will think even though they may be unable to reach reliable or satisfactory conclusions. And I have good grounds for believing that so far this little work has achieved the purpose for which it was written. If I may say it without being accused of conceit, it has made the subject clear to many who before found it incomprehensible. And, really, philosophy would not be so very obscure, if it were not for the philosophers. We may not always be able to find answers to our questions, but we ought always to understand what the questions are about. That it is not always the case is largely due to those who mistake obscurity for profundity, and in their haste to rise from the ground lose altogether their touch with the earth.

C. C.



# DETERMINISM OR FREE-WILL ?

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## I.

### THE QUESTION STATED.

AT the tail end of a lengthy series of writers, from Augustine to Martineau, and from Spinoza to William James, one might well be excused the assumption that nothing new remains to be said on so well-worn a topic as that of Free-Will. Against this, however, lies the feeling that in the case of any subject which continuously absorbs attention some service to the cause of truth is rendered by a re-statement of the problem in contemporary language, with such modifications in terminology as may be necessary, and with such illustrations from current positive knowledge as may serve to make the issue clear to a new generation. In the course of time new words are created, while old ones change their meanings and implications. This results not only in the terminology of a few generations back taking on the character of a dead language to the average contemporary reader, but may occasion the not unusual spectacle of disputants using words with such widely different meanings that even a clear comprehension of the question at issue becomes impossible.

So much may be assumed without directly controverting or endorsing Professor Paulsen's opinion that the "Free-Will problem is one which arose under certain conditions and has disappeared with the disappearance of those conditions;" or the opposite opinion of Professor William James that there is no other subject on which an inventive genius has a better chance of breaking new ground. If mankind—even educated mankind—were composed of individuals whose brains functioned with the accuracy of the most approved text-books of logic, Professor Paulsen's opinion would be self-evidently true. Granting that the conditions which gave rise to the belief in Free-Will have disappeared, the belief itself should have disappeared likewise. Professor Paulsen's own case proves that he is either wrong in thinking that these conditions have disappeared, or in assuming that, this being the case, the belief has also died out.

The truth is that beliefs do not always, or even usually, die with the conditions that gave them birth. Society always has on hand a plentiful stock of beliefs that are, like so many intellectual vagrants, without visible means of support. Human history would not present the clash and conflict of opinion it does were it otherwise. Indeed, if a belief is in possession its ejection is the most difficult of all operations. Possession is here not merely nine points of the law, it is often all the law that is acknowledged. Beliefs once established acquire an independent vitality of their own, and may defy all destructive efforts for generations. One may, therefore, agree with the first half of Professor

Paulsen's statement without endorsing the concluding portion. The problem has not, so far as the generality of civilized mankind is concerned, disappeared. The originating conditions have gone, but the belief remains, and its real nature and value can only be rightly estimated by a mental reconstruction of the conditions that gave it birth. As Spencer has reminded us, the pedigree of a belief is as important as is the pedigree of a horse. We cannot be really certain whether a belief is with us because of its social value, or because of sheer unreasoning conservatism, until we know something of its history. In any case we understand better both it and the human nature that gives it hospitality by knowing its ancestry. And of this truth no subject could better offer an illustration than the one under discussion.

Reserving this point for a moment, let us ask, "What is the essential issue between the believers in Free-Will and the upholders of the doctrine of Determinism?" One may put the Deterministic position in a few words. Essentially it is a thorough-going application of the principle of causation to human nature. What Copernicus and Kepler did for the world of astronomy, Determinism aims at doing for the world of psychological phenomena. Human nature, it asserts, is part and parcel of nature as a whole, and bears to it the same relation that a part does to the whole. When the Determinist refers to the "Order of Nature" he includes all, and asserts that an accurate analysis of human nature will be found to exemplify the same principle of causation that is seen to obtain elsewhere. True,

mental phenomena have laws of their own, as chemistry and biology have their own peculiar laws, but these are additional, not contradictory to other natural laws. Any exception to this is apparent, not real. Man's nature, physical, biological, psychological, and sociological, is to be studied as we study other natural phenomena, and the closer our study the clearer the recognition that its manifestations are dependent upon processes with which no one dreams of associating the conception of "freedom." Determinism asserts that if we knew the quality and inclination of all the forces bearing upon human nature, in the same way that we know the forces determining the motions of a planet, then the forecasting of conduct would become a mere problem in moral mathematics. That we cannot do this, nor may ever be able to do it, is due to the enormous and ever-changing complexity of the forces that determine conduct. But this ought not to blind us to the general truth of the principle involved. To some extent we do forecast human conduct; that we cannot always do so, or cannot do so completely, only proves weakness or ignorance. The Determinist claims, therefore, that his view of human nature is thoroughly scientific, and that he is only applying here principles that have borne such excellent fruit elsewhere; and, finally, that unless this view of human nature be accepted the scientific cultivation of character becomes an impossibility.

So far the Determinist. The believer in Free-Will—for the future it will be briefer and more convenient to use the term "Volitionist" or "Indeterminist"—does not on his part deny the influence on the



human organism of those forces on which the Determinist lays stress. What he denies is that any of them singly, or all of them collectively, can ever furnish an adequate and exhaustive account of human action. He affirms that after analysis has done its utmost there remains an unexplained residuum beyond the reach of the instruments or the methods of positive science. He denies that conduct—even theoretically—admits of explanation and prediction in the same way that explanation and prediction apply to natural phenomena as a whole. It is admitted that circumstances may influence conduct, but only in the way that a cheque for five pounds enables one to become possessed of a certain quantity of bullion—provided the cheque is honoured by the bank. So the "Will" may honour or respond to certain circumstances or it may not. In other words, the deterministic influence of circumstances is contingent, not necessary. Circumstances determine conduct only when a "free" volition assents to their operation. So against the proposition that conduct is ultimately the conditioned expression of one aspect of the cosmic order, there is the counter-proposition that intentional action is the unconditioned expression of absolutely free beings, and is what it is because of the selective action of an undetermined will.

Further, against all deterministic analysis the Volitionist stubbornly opposes the testimony of consciousness, and the necessity for the belief in Free-Will as a moral postulate. Thus, even when the deterministic analysis of an action—from its source in some external stimuli, to the final neural discharge

that secures its performance is complete, it is still urged that no possible analysis can override man's conviction of "freedom." The existence of this conviction is, of course, undisputable, and it forms the bed-rock of all forms of anti-determinism. But the scientific or logical value of a conviction, as such, is surely open to question. Equally strong convictions were once held concerning the flatness of the earth's surface, the existence of witches, and a hundred and one other matters. Besides, a belief or a conviction is not a basal fact in human nature, it is the last stage of a process, and can therefore prove nothing save the fact of its own existence. Human nature at any stage of its existence is an evolution from past human nature, and many prevalent beliefs are as reminiscent in their character as our rudimentary tails are reminiscent of a simian ancestry. I hope later to make it clear that the much talked of testimony of consciousness is quite irrelevant to the question at issue; and also that the assumed necessity for the conception of "freedom" as a moral postulate is really due to a misconception of both the nature of morality and of voluntary action.

Ultimately the question, as already indicated, resolves itself into one of how far we are justified in applying the principle of causation. The Determinist denies any limit to its theoretical application. The Volitionist insists on placing man in a distinct and unique category. But this conception of causation is in itself of the nature of a growth, and a study of its development may well throw light on the present question.

A conception of causation in some form or other could hardly have been altogether absent from the most primitive races of mankind. Some experiences are so uniform, so persistent, and so universal that they would inevitably be connected in terms of cause and effect. Nevertheless, the primitive mind was so dominated by volitional conception of nature that a sense of necessary connection between events could only have been of a weak character. Experience may have shown that certain physical phenomena succeeded each other in a certain order, but the belief that these phenomena embodied the action of supernormal conscious forces would break in upon that sense of inevitability which is the very essence of scientific causation. Modern thought fixes its attention upon a given series of events and declines to go further. With us the order is inevitable. With primitive man the order, even when perceived, is conditional upon the non-interference of assumed supernormal intelligences. Each phenomenon, or each group of phenomena, thus possesses to the primitive mind precisely that quality of "freedom" which is now claimed for the human will.

How difficult is the task of establishing causal connections between physical phenomena the whole history of science bears witness. To establish causal connections between external conditions and subjective states, where the forces are more numerous and immensely more complex in their combinations, is a task of infinitely greater difficulty. Amongst savages it would never be attempted. Feelings arise without any traceable connection with surrounding conditions, nor does a recurrence of the same exter-

nal circumstances produce exactly the same result. A circumstance that produces anger one day may give rise to laughter on another occasion. Something that produces a striking effect on one person leaves another quite unaffected. Numerous feelings arise in consciousness that have all the superficial signs of being self-generated. The phenomena are too diverse in character, and the connections too complex and obscure, for uninstructed man to reach a deterministic conclusion. The conclusion is inevitable ; man himself is the absolute cause of his own actions; he is veritably master of his own fate, subject only to the malign and magical influence of other extra-human personalities.

Primitive thinking about man is thus quite in line with primitive thinking about other things. In a way man's earliest philosophy of things is more coherent and more rigorously logical than that of modern times. The same principle is applied all round. All force is conceived as vital force; "souls" or "wills" govern all. The division between animate and inanimate things is of the vaguest possible character ; that between man and animals can hardly be said to exist. Only very gradually do the distinctions between animate and inanimate, voluntary and involuntary actions, which are taken for granted by the modern mind, arise. And it is easy to conceive that in the growth of these distinctions, modes of thinking characteristic of primitive man, would linger longest in the always obscure field of psychology. Broadly, however, the growth of knowledge has consisted, as Huxley pointed out, in the substitution of a mechanical for



a volitional interpretation of things. In one department after another purposeful action yields to inevitable causation. In physics, chemistry, geology, astronomy, and kindred sciences this process is now complete. The volitional interpretation still betrays a feeble vitality in biology ; but even here the signs of an early demise are unmistakable. Its last stronghold is in psychology, and this because it is at once the newest of the sciences to be placed upon a positive basis, and also the most obscure in its ramifications. Yet there can be no reasonable doubt that the same principle which has been found to hold good in other directions will sooner or later be shown to obtain here also. Science is by its very nature progressive ; and its progress is manifested by the degree to which phenomena hitherto unrelated are brought under constantly enlarging and more comprehensive generalisations. Men were once satisfied to explain the "wetness" of water as due to a spirit of "aquosity," the movement of the blood as due to a "certain spirit" dwelling in the veins and arteries. These were not statements of knowledge, but verbose confessions of ignorance. To this same class of belief belongs the "Free-Will" of the anti-determinist. It is the living representative of that immense family of souls and spirits with which early animistic thought peopled the universe. The surviving member of a once numerous family, it carries with it the promise of the same fate that has already overtaken its predecessors.

The origin of the belief in free-will once understood, the reasons for its perpetuation are not difficult to discover. First comes the obscurity of the

processes underlying human action. This alone would secure a certain vitality for a belief that has always made the impossibility of explaining the origin, sequence, and relation of mental states its principal defence. Beyond offering as evidence the questionable affirmation of consciousness volitionists have been unanimous in resting their case upon their adversary's want of knowledge. And it is further characteristic that while holding to a theory on behalf of which not a single shred of positive evidence has ever been produced, they yet demand the most rigorous and the most complete demonstration of determinism before they will accept it as true ; this despite the presumptive evidence in its favour arising from the fact of its harmony with our knowledge in other directions.

Secondly, the human mind does not at any time commence its philosophic speculations *de novo*. It necessarily builds upon the materials accumulated by previous generations ; and usually retains the form in which previous thinking has been cast, even when the contents undergo marked modifications. Thus the ghost-soul of the savage, a veritable material copy of the body, by centuries of philosophizing gets refined into the distinct " spiritual " substance of the metaphysician. And this, not because the notion of a " soul " was derived from current knowledge or thinking, but because it was one of the inherited forms of thought to which philosophy had to accommodate itself. The result of this pressure of the past upon contemporary thinking is that a large proportion of mental activity is in each generation devoted to reconciling past theories of things with

current knowledge. In our own time the number of volumes written to reconcile the theory of evolution with already existing religious views is a striking example of this phenomenon. And beyond the philosophic few there lies the mass of the people with whom an established opinion of any kind takes on something of a sacred character. Unfortunately, too, many writers work with an eye to the prejudices of this class, which prejudices are in turn strengthened by the tacit support of men of ability, or at least by their not openly controverting them. It is, however, of the greatest significance that since the opening of the modern scientific period, wherever qualified thinkers have deliberately based their conclusions upon contemporary knowledge the theory of determinism has been generally upheld.

A third cause of the persistence of the belief in "Free-Will" is its association with theology. For at least four centuries, whenever the discussion of the subject has assumed an acute form, it has been due to theological requirements rather than to ethical or psychological considerations. True, many other reasons have been advanced, but these have been little more than cloaks for the theological interest. Apart from theology there does not seem any valid reason why the principle of determinism should rouse more opposition in connection with human character than it does in connection with the course of physical nature. Or if it be pointed out that the establishment of the principle of universal causation, as applied to nature at large, was not established without opposition, then the reply is that here again it was the religious interest that dictated the opposi-

tion. It was felt that the reduction of all physical phenomena to a mechanical sequence was derogatory to the majesty of God, excluded the deity from his own universe, and generally weakened the force of religious beliefs. And, as a mere matter of historic fact, the establishment of the scientific conception of nature did have, with the bulk of mankind, precisely the consequences predicted. And when in the course of events theological considerations were banished from one department of science after another, it was only natural that theologians should fight with the greater tenacity to maintain a footing in the region of human nature.

Although the subject is in origin pre-Christian, it was in connection with Christian theology that it assumed an important place in European thinking. The development of monotheism gave the problem a sharper point and a deeper meaning. The issue here was a simple one. Given the belief in God as sole creator and governor of the world, and he may conceivably be related to mankind in one of two ways. Either he induces man to carry out his will by an appeal to human reason and emotion, or he has so arranged matters that certain events will inevitably come to pass at a certain time, human effort being one of the contributory agencies to that end. The first supposition leaves man "free"—at least in his relation to deity. The second leads straight to the Christian doctrine of predestination. Either supposition has, from the theological point of view, its disadvantages. The first leaves man free as against God, but it limits the power of deity by creating an autonomous force that may act



contrary to the divine will. The second opens up the question of the divine wisdom and goodness, and by making God responsible for evil conflicts with the demands of the moral sense. Evil and goodness are made parts of the divine plan, and as man must fit in with the general pre-arranged scheme, personal merit and demerit disappear. These considerations explain why in the course of the Free-Will controversy official Christianity has ranged itself now on one side and now on the other. It has championed Determinism or Indeterminism as the occasion served its interest. To-day, owing to easily discoverable reasons, Christian writers are, in the main, markedly anti-deterministic.

The first clear statement of the Christian position, if we omit the Pauline teaching that we are all as clay in the hands of the potter, appears in the writings of Augustine. In opposition to the Pelagians, Augustine maintained a doctrine of absolute predestination. No room was allowed for human self-determination to anyone but the first man. Adam was created and endowed with free-will, and chose evil—a curious verification of Voltaire's definition of Free-Will as a capacity by means of which man gets himself damned. And as in Adam there were contained, potentially, all future generations, all are pre-destined to eternal damnation except such as are saved through the free gift of divine grace. This theory of Augustine's, carried to the point of asserting the damnation of infants, was modified in several respects by that great medieval Christian teacher, Thomas Aquinas, who held that while the will might be "free" from

external restraint, it was determined by our reason, but was reinstated in full force by John Calvin. He denied that the goodness or badness of man had anything whatever to do with the bestowal or withholding of grace. God dooms men either to heaven or hell, for no other reason than that he chooses to do so. Most of the leading Protestants of the early Reformation period were strongly opposed to "free-will." For instance, Zwingli asserted that God was the "author, mover, and impeller to sin." Still more emphatic was Luther. The will of man he compared to a horse, "If mounted by God it wills and wends whithersoever God may will; if mounted by Satan it wills and wends whithersoever Satan may will; neither hath it any liberty of choice to which of the riders it shall run, or which it shall choose; but the riders themselves contend for its acquisition and possession." Among the most powerful essays ever written in defence of Determinism was Jonathan Edwards's, the famous Protestant divine, "Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions respecting that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be essential to moral agency, virtue and vice, reward and punishment, praise and blame," and to which I shall have occasion to refer later. Finally, the explicit declarations of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Articles of the Church of England, that man's will,—in the absence of grace,—cannot accomplish good works, throw a curious light on the theological opponents of Determinism who denounce it as anti-Christian and immoral.

## II.

### "FREEDOM" AND "WILL."

To David Hume the dispute between the advocates of "Free-Will" and the advocates of "Necessity" was almost entirely a matter of words. The essence of the question, he thought, both sides were agreed on, and consequently expressed the opinion that "a few intelligible definitions would immediately have put an end to the whole controversy." That Hume was over sanguine is shown by the controversy being still with us. Yet his recommendation as to intelligible definitions, while pertinent to all controversy, is specially so with regard to such a subject as that of "Free-Will." For much of the anti-Determinist case actually rests upon giving a misleading significance to certain phrases, while applying others in a direction where they have no legitimate application. Consider, for instance, the controversial significance of such a phrase as "*Liberty versus Necessity*"—the older name for Determinism. We all love liberty, we all resent compulsion, and, as Mill pointed out, he who announces himself as a champion of Liberty has gained the sympathies of his hearers before he has commenced to argue his case. Such words play the same part that "catchy" election cries do in securing votes. Such phrases as "Power of Choice," "Sense of Responsibility," "Testimony of Consciousness,"

"Consciousness of Freedom," are all expressions that, while helpful and legitimate when used with due care and understanding, as usually employed serve only to confuse the issue and prevent comprehension.

Not that the dispute between the Volitionist and the Determinist is a merely verbal one. The controversy carries with it a significance of the deepest kind. Fundamentally the issue expresses the antagonism of two culture stages, an antagonism which finds expression in many other directions. We are in fact concerned with what Tylor well calls the deepest of all distinctions in human thought, the distinction that separates Animism from Materialism. Much as philosophic ingenuity may do in the way of inventing defences against the application of the principle of causation to human action, the deeper our analysis of the controversy, the more clearly is it seen that we are dealing with an attenuated form of that primitive animism which once characterised all human thinking. The persistence of types is a phenomenon that occurs as frequently in the world of mind as it does in the world of biology. Or just as when a country is overrun by a superior civilisation, primitive customs are found lingering in remote districts, so unscientific modes of thinking linger in relation to the more obscure mental processes in spite of the conquests of science in other directions.

It is well to bear these considerations in mind, even while admitting that a great deal of the dispute does turn upon the fitness of the language employed, and the accuracy which which it is used. And if intelligible definition may not, as Hume hoped, end



the controversy, it will at least have the merit of making the issue plain.

What is it that people have in their minds when they speak of the "Freedom of the Will"? Curiously enough, the advocates of "free-will" seldom condescend to favour us with anything so commonplace as a definition, or if they do it tells us little. We are consequently compelled to dig out the meanings of their cardinal terms from the arguments used. Now the whole of the argument for "free-will" makes the word "free" or "freedom" the equivalent to *an absence of determining conditions*; either this, or the case for "free-will" is surrendered. For if a man's decisions are in any way influenced—"influenced" is here only another word for "determined"—Determinism is admitted. I need not argue whether decisions are wholly or partly determined, the real and only question being whether they are determined at all. What is called by some a limited free-will is really only another name for unlimited nonsense.

"Freedom," as used by the Volitionist, being an equivalent for "absence of determining conditions," let us ask next what this means. Here I am brought to a dead halt. I do not know what it means. I cannot even conceive it as meaning anything at all. At any rate, I am quite certain that it is outside the region of scientific thought and nomenclature. Scientifically, atoms of matter are not *free* to move in any direction, the planets are not *free* to move in any shaped orbit, the blood is not *free* to circulate, the muscles are not *free* to contract, the brain is not *free* to function. In all these cases what takes

place is the result of all converging circumstances and conditions. Given these and the result follows. Scientifically, the thing that occurs is the only thing possible. If the word "free" is used in science, it is as a figure of speech, as when one speaks of a free gas, or of the blood not being free to circulate owing to the existence of a constricted artery. But in either case all that is meant is that a change in the nature of the conditions gives rise to a corresponding change of result. The determination of the gas or the blood to behave in a definite way is as great in any case. From the point of view of science, then, to speak of an absence of determining conditions is the most complete nonsense. All science is a search for the conditions that determine phenomena. Save as a metaphor, "freedom" has no place whatever in positive science.

Are we then to discard the use of such a word as "freedom" altogether? By no means. Properly applied, the word is intelligible and useful enough. When, for instance, we speak of a free man, a free state, a free country, or free trade, we are using the word "free" in a legitimate manner, and can give to it a precise significance. A free state is one in which the people composing it pursue their way uncoerced by other states. A free man is one who is at liberty to exert bodily action or express his opinions. We do not mean that in the first instance the people are not governed by laws, or that physical conditions are without influence on them; nor do we mean, in the second instance, that the actions and opinions of the free man are not the result of heredity, bodily structure, education,

social position, etc. The obvious meaning of "freedom" in each of these cases is an absence of external and non-essential coercion. It does not touch the question of why we act as we do, or of why we please to act in this or that manner. As Jonathan Edwards puts it: "The plain, obvious meaning of the words 'freedom' and 'liberty' is power and opportunity, or advantage that any one has to do as he pleases." Or as Hume put it more elaborately:—

"What is meant by liberty when applied to voluntary actions? We cannot surely mean that actions have so little connection with motives, inclinations, and circumstances that one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from the other. For these are plain and acknowledged matters of fact. By liberty, then, we can only mean a power of acting or not acting, according to the determination of the will—that is, if we choose to remain at rest we may; and if we choose to move, we also may."

The ultimate significance of "liberty" or "freedom" is thus sociological. Here it expresses a fact; in positive science it is a mere metaphor, and, as experience shows, a misleading one. Its use in philosophy dates from the time of the Greeks, and when they spoke of a free man they were borrowing an illustration from their social life. There were slaves and there were free men, and in speaking of a free man people were not so likely as they were at

a later date to be misled by a metaphor. Unfortunately, its use in philosophy has continued, while its limitations have been ignored. To ask if a man is free is an intelligible question. To ask whether actions are free from the determining associations of organization and environment admits of but one intelligible reply. Personally, I agree with Professor Bain that the term "is brought in by main force, into a phenomenon to which it is altogether incommensurable," and it would be well if it could be excluded altogether from serious discussion (1).

Now let us take that equally confusing word "will." Unfortunately, few of those who champion the freedom of the will think it worth while to trouble their readers with a clear definition of what they mean by it. The orthodox definition of the will as "a faculty of the soul" tells us nothing. It is explaining something the existence of which

(1) "The subjective sense of freedom, sometimes alleged against Determinism, has no bearing on the question whatever. The view that it has a bearing rests upon the belief that causes compel their effects, or that nature enforces obedience to its laws as governments do. These are mere anthropomorphic superstitions, due to assimilation of causes with volitions, and of natural laws with human edicts. We feel that our will is not compelled, but that only means that it is not other than we choose it to be. It is one of the demerits of the traditional theory of causality that it has created an artificial opposition between determinism and the freedom of which we are introspectively conscious." (Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 206.)

So also Wundt: "Freedom and constraint are reciprocal concepts; they are both necessarily connected with consciousness; outside of consciousness they are both imaginary concepts, which only a mythologising imagination could relate to things." (*Human and Animal Psychology*, p. 426.)

is questioned by reference to something else the existence of which is unknown. Or the definition is volunteered, "Will is the power to decide," a description which only tells us that to will is to will. Professor James tells us that "Desire, wish, will, are states of mind which every one knows, and which no definition can make plainer." This may be true of desire and wish; it certainly is not true of "will." There is no question as to "will" being a state of mind, but as to every one knowing its character, and above all possessing the knowledge enabling him to discriminate between "will" and "desire" and "wish," this is highly questionable. One may also be permitted the opinion that if advocates of "free-will" were to seriously set themselves the task of discovering what they do mean by "will," and also in what way it may be differentiated from other mental states, the number of the champions of that curious doctrine would rapidly diminish.

What is it that constitutes an act of volition, or supplies us with the fact of will? The larger part of our bodily movements do not come under the heading of volition at all. The primary bodily movements are reflex, instinctive, emotional, the action following without any interposition of consciousness. Of course, an action that is performed quite automatically at one time may be voluntarily performed at another time. I may close my eyelid deliberately, or it may be because of the approach of some foreign object. Or an action, if it be performed frequently, tends to become automatic. To come within the category of a voluntary action,



it must be performed consciously, and there is also present some consciousness of an end to be realized. Every voluntary action is thus really dependent upon memory. A newly-born child has no volitions, only reflexes. It is only when experience has supplied us with an idea of what *may* be done that we *will* it shall be done. This consideration alone is enough to shatter the case for the supposed freedom of the will.\*

If we analyze any simple act of volition what has just been said will be made quite clear. I am sitting in a room and *will* to open a window; it may, be to get fresh air, to look out, or for some other reason. Assume that the first is the correct reason, the room being close and "stuffy." First of all, then, I become aware of a more or less unpleasant feeling; my experience tells me this is because the air in the room needs purifying. Experience also tells me that by opening a window the desired result will be obtained. Finally, I open the window and experience a feeling of relief and satisfaction. Now had the room been without a window, and the door bolted from the outside, or had the window been too heavy for me to raise, no "volition"

\*The essential issue is again confused by the language employed. If all volitional action is action performed with the view to an end, a quite correct and completely adequate word would be "intentional"! If we were to speak of an "intentional" action instead of a voluntary one, the nature of the act would be clear, the factors of experience, memory, consciousness of an end, would be indicated, and the misleading associations of "willing" avoided. It is difficult, however, to introduce a new terminology, and so I must beg the reader, in the interests of clarity, to bear in mind that whenever "voluntary action" is referred to, it is "intentional" action that is connoted by the phrase.

would have arisen. I should still have had the desire for fresh air, but not seeing any means by which this could be obtained, I should have had no *motive* for action, and should have remained perfectly passive. In order that my desire may operate as a motive there must be not only a consciousness of a need, but also a mental representation of the means by which that need is to be gratified. I *will* to do a thing, when allied to the desire for that thing there is a conception of *how* it is to be done, of the means to be employed. Without this I have no motive, only a desire; without a consciousness of the nature of the desire, there is nothing but pure feeling. "Willing terminates with the prevalence of the idea. . . ." "Attention with effort is all that any case of volition implies." (Prof. W. James, *Princip. of Psychology*, II. 560-1.)

The stages of the process are, feeling rising into consciousness as desire, the perception of the means to realize an end which raises the desire from the statical to the dynamic stage of motive, and finally a voluntary or intentional action. Now at no stage of this process is there room for the intervention of any power or faculty not expressed in a strictly sequential process. Of course, the action I have taken as an example is an exceedingly simple one, but the more complex actions only offer greater difficulties of analysis without leading to any different result. This will be seen more clearly when we come to deal with "choice" and "deliberation." From the moment that a certain stimulus creates a desire in an organism, to the time that desire expresses itself in action, there is no gap in the chain

through which a "Free-Will" may manifest its being. The physiologist points out that at the basis of all our feelings and ideas there lie certain neural processes. The psychologist takes up the story and from the dawn of desire to action finds no break—or at least none that future knowledge may not reasonably hope to make good. Want of knowledge may at present prevent our tracing all the details of the process, but this is surely a very inadequate ground on which to affirm the existence of a power at variance with our knowledge of nature in other directions.†

Now in thus tracing the course of a voluntary action are we doing any more than observing the action of desire in consciousness? If, yes, the writer is quite unaware of the fact. If I remove all feeling, all desire, all motive, "the will" disappears. Excite feeling, generate desire, and there is the occasion for a voluntary action. Multiply the number of desires and the operation of "will" becomes evident. Thus when a writer like Professor Hyslop says, "If two motives offer different attractions to the will," the reply is that the "will" is not one thing, and motives other things, but two aspects of one fact. The "will" is not something that decides or chooses between motives; the "will" is nothing more than the name given to that motive or cluster of motives which is sufficiently strong to overcome resistance and to express itself

†Whether we work backward or forward the result is the same. Strip off from the mind all feelings, desires, all consciousness of ends and means to ends, and what there is left is not a "will" ready to throw the weight of its preference in this or that direction, but a complete blank.

in action. I emphasize the expression "overcome resistance" because without competing motives and a sense of resistance we have no clear consciousness of volition. Where only one desire is present in consciousness, or where it is of overwhelming strength, feeling is succeeded by action without any recognizable hiatus. It is the sense of conflict, the break, that is essential to creating a lively sense of volition, and also, as shall see later, to the sense of choice and deliberation. But in speaking of an action as the expression of motives, or as an expression of "will," both statements are identical so far as the fact is concerned. We have not desires, motives, and "will," there is simply a desire or desires that assume the quality of a motive by being strong enough to result in action. As Spencer has put it, "Will is no more an existence apart from the predominant feeling than a king is an existence apart from the man occupying the throne."

All that is to be found in any act of "will" is a desire accompanied by the consciousness of an end. To put the same thing in another way, we have a desire, the consciousness of an end and the means of realizing it, and, finally, action. To the physiological and psychological processes that culminate in action we give the name of motive. Properly speaking a motive that does not issue in action—or inhibition—is not a motive at all, it is a mere desire. And apart from the presence of desire, or of desires, "will" does not exist. It is a pure abstraction, valuable enough as an abstraction, but having no more real existence apart from particular motives, than "tree" is a real existence apart from

particular trees. Physiologically, says Dr. Maude-sley :—

“ We cannot choose but reject *the* will. . . . As physiologists we have to deal with volition as a function of the supreme centres, following reflection, varying in quantity and quality as its cause varies, strengthened by education and exercise, enfeebled by disuse, decaying with decay of structure. . . . We have to deal with will not as a single undecomposable faculty unaffected by bodily conditions, but as a result of organic changes in the supreme centres, affected as certainly and as seriously by disorders of them as our motor faculties are by disorders of their centres.”

And, says Professor Sully, referring to *the* will :—

“ Modern scientific psychology knows nothing of such an entity. As a science of phenomena and their laws, it confines itself to a consideration of the processes of volition, and wholly discards the hypothesis of a substantial will as unnecessary and unscientific.”

Neither physiology nor psychology, neither a sane science nor a sound philosophy, knows anything of, or can find use for, an autonomous “ will.” “ Will ” as the final term of a discoverable series may be admitted; “ will ” as a self-directing force, deciding whether particular desires shall or shall not



prevail, answers to nothing conformable to our knowledge of man, and is plainly but the ghost of the wills and souls of our savage ancestors. If instead of speaking of the freedom of the will, we spoke of uncaused volitions, the position of the volitionist would be clear, and its indefensible character plain to all. But by giving the abstraction “will” a concrete existence, and by taking from sociology a word such as “freedom” and using it in a sphere in which it has no legitimate application, the issue is confused, and a scientifically absurd theory given an air of plausibility. The dispute between the Determinist and the Indeterminist is certainly not one of words only, but it is one in which the cardinal terms employed need the most careful examination if we are to clear away from the subject the verbal fog created by theologians and metaphysicians.

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### III.

#### CONSCIOUSNESS, DELIBERATION, AND CHOICE.

THE one argument used by the Indeterminist against the Deterministic position with some degree of universality is that of the testimony of consciousness. It is the one to which practically all have appealed, and which all have flattered themselves was simple in nature and convincing in character. Professor Sidgwick, although he admitted that this testimony might be illusory, yet asserted "There is but one opposing argument of real force, namely, the immediate affirmation of consciousness in the moment of deliberate action." And by the testimony of consciousness must be meant, not, of course, a consciousness of acting, but that at the moment of acting we could, *under identical conditions*, have selected and acted upon an alternative that has been rejected. I emphasize the phrase "under identical conditions," because otherwise nothing is in dispute, and because, as we shall see, this important consideration has not been always or even frequently borne in mind.

The question is, What does consciousness really tell us, and how far is its testimony valid? In some directions it must be admitted that the testimony of consciousness is absolute. In others it cannot, without verification, claim any authority whatever. When I say that I have a feeling of heat or

coldness, of pleasure or pain, there is here a direct deliverance of consciousness against which there is no appeal. But consciousness does not and cannot tell me why I feel hot or cold, or what is the cause of a pain I am experiencing. In this last case the testimony of consciousness may be distinctly misleading. As it tells us nothing of the existence of a brain, a nervous system, viscera, etc., its testimony as to the cause of pain is obviously of no value. We are conscious of states of mind, and that is all. A man seized with sudden paralysis may be conscious of his power to move a limb, only to discover by experience his impotence. In short, consciousness cannot, indeed does not, tell us the causes of our states of mind. For this information we are thrown back upon observation, experiment, and experience. We must, then, make quite sure when we interrogate consciousness, exactly what it is that consciousness says, and whether what it says is on a subject that comes within its province.

What is, then, the testimony of consciousness? When it is said that we are conscious of our ability to have selected one alternative at the time that another is chosen, I think this may be fairly met with the retort that consciousness is unable to inform us as to our actual ability to do anything at all. I may be quite conscious of a desire to jump a six foot fence, or lift a weight of half a ton, but whether I am actually able to do so or not, only experience can decide. What I am really conscious of is a desire to vault a given height or lift a given weight, and it is surely an inexcusable confusion to speak of a desire to do a particular thing as the

equivalent of an ability to do it. If a consciousness of desire equalled the ability to perform failure would be but little known among men.

All that consciousness really tells us is of the existence of passing states of mind. It can tell us nothing of their origin, their value, or their consequences. In the particular instance under consideration consciousness informs us of the fact of choice, and this no Determinist has ever dreamed of denying. He does assert that choice, as the Indeterminist persists in using the term, is a delusion, but otherwise, as will be shown later, he claims that it is only on deterministic lines that choice can have any meaning or ethical significance. In any voluntary action I am conscious of the possibility of choice and of having chosen, and that is really all. What is the nature of that possibility, and why I choose one thing rather than another—on these points consciousness can give us no information whatever. One might as reasonably argue that a consciousness of hunger gives us a knowledge of the process of digestion, as argue that a consciousness of choice supplies us with a knowledge of the mechanism of the process. We are conscious of the presence of several desires, we are also conscious that out of these several desires one is strong enough to rank as a motive, but it tells us absolutely nothing of the causes or conditions that have resulted in the emergence of that motive. Instead of telling us that we could have acted in opposition to the strongest motive—which is really the indeterminist position—consciousness simply reveals which desire is the most powerful. We are conscious that

other desires were present, we are also aware of the possibility that another desire than the one that actually prevailed might have been the most powerful; but when we admit this and say that we *could* have acted differently, we have really displaced the actual conditions by imaginary ones. We *might* have preferred to act differently. This is not denied. It is not questioned that we do choose, or that the same person chooses, differently or different occasions. The question really is, Why have we chosen thus or thus? And so far as consciousness is concerned we are quite in the dark as to why one choice is made rather than another, what are the conditions that give rise to our conscious desires, or why one desire is more powerful than another.

Consciousness, then, can testify only to the reality of its own states; no more. It can tell us nothing of their causes. It cannot tell us that man has a brain and nervous system, and can tell us nothing of the connection between mental states and the condition of the bodily organs. The chief factor in conduct (habit) lies outside the region of consciousness altogether. In most cases we act as we have been in the habit of acting, and our present conduct expresses the sum of our previous actions and inclinations. Every action we perform assists the formation of a habit, and with every repetition of a particular action we find its performance easier. Indeed, a very powerful criticism of the trustworthiness of consciousness is found in the fact that the determining causes of conduct lie largely in the region of the unconscious or subconscious, and of this territory consciousness can tell us no more than



a ripple on the surface of a river can tell us of its depths.

Next to the emphasis upon the testimony of consciousness the Indeterminist lays special stress upon the facts of choice and deliberation. Can we really say, it is asked, that man chooses and deliberates, or even that in any genuine sense he does anything at all, if all his actions are pre-determined by his constitution and environment? If every act of man is determined and man himself a mere stage in the process unending and unbroken, is it not idle to speak of man deliberating on alternatives and choosing that which seems to him best? We continue using words that on deterministic lines have lost all meaning. And if Determinists do not realise this, it is because the logical implications of their doctrines have never been fully explored.

Well, it entirely depends upon the sense in which one uses the cardinal terms in the discussion. If deliberation and choice when applied to mental processes are used in the same sense as when these terms are used as descriptive of the proceedings of a committee, then we can all agree that deliberation would be as great a sham as it would be if the members of a committee before meeting had determined upon their decision. But, we may note in passing, that even here, when the deliberations are genuine, the votes of each member are supposed to be decided by the reasons advanced during the discussion—that is the decision of each individual member is determined by the forces evoked during the deliberations.

The scientific method, and it may be added, the

sane and profitable method, is not to come to the study of a problem with ready-made meanings and compel the facts, under penalty of disqualification, to agree with them, but to let the facts determine what meaning is to be attached to the words used. It is mere childish petulance for the Indeterminist to say that unless certain words are used with *his* meaning they shall not be used at all, but shall be expelled our vocabulary. When gravity was conceived as a force moving downward through infinite space, the existence of people on the other side of the earth was denied as being contrary to the law of gravitation. A more correct knowledge of the phenomena did not lead people to discard gravity; the meaning of the word was revised. And really neither language nor morality is the private property of the Indeterminist, and he is, therefore, not at liberty to annihilate either for not coming up to his expectations. He must submit to such revision of his ideas, or his language, or of both, as more accurate knowledge may demand.

The question is not, then, whether Determinism destroys deliberation and choice and responsibility, but what meaning Determinism can legitimately place upon these words, and is this meaning in harmony with what we know to be true. With responsibility we will deal at length later. For the present let us see what is really involved in the fact of choice. Determinism, we are advised, must deny the reality of choice, because choice assumes alternatives, and there can be no genuine alternatives if events are determined. Let us see. If I am watching a stone rolling down a hillside, and am

in doubt as to whether it will pass to the right or to the left of a given point, I shall not recognize any resident capacity in the stone for choosing one path rather than the other. The absence of consciousness in the stone precludes such an assumption. But suppose we substitute for the stone a barefooted human being, and assume that one path is smooth while the other is liberally sprinkled with sharp pointed stones. There would then be an obvious reason for the selection of one path, and no one would hesitate to say that here was an illustration of the exercise of choice. Choice, then, is a phenomenon of consciousness, and it implies a recognition of alternatives. But a recognition of alternatives does not by any means imply that either of two are equally eligible. It is merely a consciousness of the fact that they exist, and that either might be selected were circumstances favourable to its selection. Without labouring the point we may safely say that all that is given in the fact of choice is the consciousness of a choice. There is nothing in it that tells us of the conditions of the selection, or whether it was possible for the agent to have chosen differently or not.

So far there is nothing in Determinism that is discordant with the fact of choice, indeed, it has a perfectly reasonable theory of the process. Why is there a choice or selection of things or actions? Clearly the reason must be looked for in the nature of the thing selected, or in the nature of the agent that selects, or in a combination of both factors. Either there is an organic prompting in favour of the thing selected, as when a baby takes a bottle

of milk and rejects a bottle of vinegar, or there is a recognition that the selection will enable the agent to better realize whatever end he has in view. The alternatives are there, and they are real in the only sense in which they can be real. But they are not real in the sense of their being equally eligible—which is the sense in which the Indeterminist uses the word. For that would destroy choice altogether. Unless a selection is made because certain things offer greater attractions than other things to the agent, no intelligible meaning can be attached to such a word as "Choice." We should have a mere blind explosion of energy, the direction taken no more involving choice than the stone's path down a hillside. And if the "Will" chooses between alternatives because one is more desirable than the other, its "freedom" (in the Indeterminist sense) is sacrificed, and the selection is correspondingly determined. There can be no real choice in the absence of a determinative influence exercised by one of the things chosen.

But it is urged that this line of reasoning does not explain the feeling of possibility that we have at the moment of action. I think it explains possibility as it explains choice, provided we allow facts to determine the meaning of words instead of torturing facts to suit certain forms of language. If by possibility we mean that under identical conditions, other things than those which actually occur are possible, then this may be confidently met with a flat denial. If, on the other hand, it is meant that by varying the conditions other possibilities become actualities, this is a statement that to a



Determinist is self-evident. As a matter of fact, there are only two senses in which the word "possibility" may be rightly used, and neither sense yields any evidence against Determinism.

One of these meanings is simply an expression of our own ignorance on the matter that happens to be before us. If I am asked what kind of weather we are likely to have a month hence, I should reply that it is equally possible the day may be dry or wet, bright or dull. I do not mean to imply that had I adequate knowledge it would not be as easy to predict the kind of weather on that date as it is to predict the position of Neptune. It is simply an expression of my own ignorance. But, as Spinoza pointed out, possibility narrows as knowledge grows. To complete ignorance anything is possible because the course of events is unknown. As a comprehension of natural causation develops, people speak less of what may possibly occur, and more of what will occur. Possibility here has no reference to the course of events, only to our knowledge, or want of knowledge, concerning their order. To say that it is possible for a man to do either this or that is, so far as a spectator is concerned, only to say that our knowledge concerning the man's whole nature is not extensive enough, or exact enough for us to predict what he will do. Nor is the case altered if instead of an outsider, it is the agent himself who is incapable of prediction. For all that amounts to is the assertion that the agent is ignorant of the relative strength of desires that may be aroused under a particular conjuncture of circumstances.



The second sense of "possibility" depends upon our ability to imagine conditions not actually present at the moment of action. By a trick of imagination I can picture myself acting differently, or, on looking back, I can see that I might have acted differently. But in either case I have altered in thought the conditions that actually existed at the moment of action. Generally, all it means is that with a number of conflicting desires present, I am conscious that a very slight variation in the relative strength of these desires would result in a different course of conduct. And the conditions affecting conduct are so complex and so easily varied that it is small wonder there is lacking in this instance that sense of inevitability present when one is dealing with physical processes. But the essential question is not whether a slight change of conditions would produce a different result, but whether under identical conditions two opposite courses of action are equally possible? And this is not only untrue in fact, it is unthinkable, as a formal proposition. Even the old adage, "There, but for the grace of God, go I," while recognizing a different possibility, also recognized that a variation in the factors—the elimination of the grace of God—is essential if the possibility was to become an actuality. That the sense of possibility implies more than this may be safely denied, let who will make the opposite affirmation.

This discussion of the nature and function of choice will help us to realize more clearly than would otherwise be the case the nature of deliberation. This question has always played an important part

in the Free-Will controversy, because it has stood as the very antithesis of a reflex or obviously mechanical action. Deliberation, it has been argued, does very clearly point to a determinative power exercised by the human will, and a power that cannot be explained in the same terms with which we explain other events. One anti-determinist writer remarks that "if a volition is the effect of a 'motive,' it should follow immediately upon the occurrence of the motive. But if there is deliberation between motives, they do not seem to have casual power to initiate a volition until a prior causal power directs them, and this would be the deliberating subject."

Now there are numerous cases, the majority probably, where action does follow immediately upon the presence of desire. And in such cases we are not aware of any process of deliberation, although there may be a truly intentional action. And from this single case we have a whole series of examples that will take us to the other extreme where the desires are so numerous and so conflicting that an excess of deliberation may prevent action altogether. Let us take an illustration. Sitting in my room on a fine day I am conscious of a desire for a walk. Provided no opposing feeling or desire is present I should at once rise and go out. But I may be conscious of a number of other feelings based upon various considerations. There is the fact of leaving the task on which I am engaged, and the desire to get it finished. There is the trouble of dressing, the consideration that once out I may wish I had stayed in, or that it may rain, or that I may be

needed at home: all these result in a state of indecision, and induce deliberation. Imagination is excited, ideal feelings are aroused, and eventually a choice is made. I decide on the walk. What is it, now, that has occurred? My first desire for a walk has been enforced by a representation of all the advantages that may be gained by going out, and these have proved themselves strong enough to bear down all opposition. Had any other desire gained strength, or had the conviction that it would rain been strong enough, a different motive would have emerged from this conflict of desires and ideas. No matter how we vary the circumstances, this is substantially what occurs in every case where deliberation and choice are involved. Not only is this what does occur, but it is impossible to picture clearly any other process. The only evidence we can have of the relative strength of ideas is that one triumphs over others. To say that the weaker desire triumphs is to make a statement the absurdity of which is self-evident.

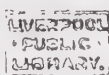
This conclusion cannot be invalidated by the argument that a particular desire becomes the stronger because the "will" declares in its favour. One need only ask, by way of reply, Why does the "will" declare in favour of one desire rather than another? There is no dispute that a choice is made. Those who say that a man can choose what he likes are not making a statement that conflicts in the slightest degree with Determinism. The Determinist says as clearly as anyone that I do what I choose to do. The real question is why do I choose this rather than that? Why does the "will" pro-

nounce in favour of one desire rather than another? No one can believe that all desires are of equal strength or value to the agent. Such an assumption would be too absurd for serious argument. But if all desires are not of equal strength and value, the only conclusion left is that certain ones operate because they are, in relation to the particular organism, of greater value than others. And in that case we are simply restating Determinism. The action of the environment is conditioned by the nature of the organism. The reaction of the organism is conditioned by the character of the environment. The resultant is a compound of the two.

It is, moreover, an absurdity to speak of the "will" or the self as though this were something apart from the various phases of consciousness. In the contest of feelings and desires that calls forth deliberation *I* am equally involved in every aspect of the process. As Professor James points out, "both effort and resistance are ours, and the identification of our *self* with one of these factors is an illusion and a trick of speech." My self and my mental states are not two distinct things; they constitute myself, and if these are eliminated there is no self left to talk about.

Further, in the growth of each individual, conscious and deliberative action can be seen developing out of automatic action—the simplest and earliest type of action. Not only does deliberative action develop from reflex action, but it sinks into reflex action again. One of the commonest of experiences is that actions performed at one time slowly and after deliberation are at another time performed rapidly

and automatically. Every action contributes to the formation of a habit, and frequently repetition results in the habit becoming a personal characteristic. Deliberation and choice are not even always the mark of a highly developed character; they may denote a poorly-developed one—one that is ill adapted to social requirements. One man, on going into a room where there is a purse of money, may only after long deliberation and from conscious choice refrain from stealing it. Another person, under the same conditions, may be conscious of no choice, no effort, the desire to steal the purse being one that is foreign to his nature. In two such by no means uncommon instances, we should have no doubt as to which represented the higher type of character. Morally, it is not the feeling, "I could have acted dishonestly instead of honestly had I so chosen," that marks the ethically developed character, but the performance of the right action at the right moment, without a consciousness of tendency in the opposite direction. But the aim of education is, in the one direction, to weaken the sense of choice by the formation of right habits, moral and intellectual; and on the other hand by bringing man into a more direct contact with a wider and more complex environment, deliberation becomes one of the conditions of a co-ordination of ideas and actions that will result in a more perfect adaptation.



#### IV.

### SOME ALLEGED CONSEQUENCES OF DETERMINISM.

NOT the least curious aspect of the Free-Will controversy is that those who oppose Determinism base a large part of their argumentation upon the supposed evil consequences that will follow its acceptance. In a work from which I have already cited, Mr. F. C. S. Schiller falls foul of Determinism because, he says, while incompatible with morality, its champions nevertheless imagine they are leaving morality undisturbed. The real difficulty of Determinism is, he says, that in its world, events being fully determined, there can be no alternatives. Things are what they must be. They must be because they are. No man can help doing what he does. Man himself belongs to a sequence unending and unbroken. "To imagine therefore that Determinism, after annihilating the moral agent, remains compatible with morality, simply means that the logical implications of the doctrine have never been fully explored." And he adds: "The charge against it is not merely that it fails to do full justice to the ethical fact of responsibility, but that it utterly annihilates the moral agent." This, he says, is the real dilemma, and Determinism has never answered it.

It is curious that so clever a writer as Mr. Schiller





should fail to realize that taking Determinism in its most drastic form, and accepting it in the most unequivocal manner, nothing can suffer, because everything remains as it must be—including the facts, feelings, and consequences of the moral life. Observe, it is part of Mr. Schiller's case against Determinism that on determinist lines everything, down to the minutest happenings, is the necessary result of all antecedent and co-operating conditions. But this being the case, if Determinism leaves no room for chance or absolute origination, how comes it that an acceptance of Determinism initiates an absolutely new thing—the destruction of morality? Surely it is coming very near the absurd to charge Determinism with breaking an unbreakable sequence. It is surely idle to credit Determinism with doing what is impossible for it to accomplish. So far as morality is a real thing, so far as the facts of the moral life are real things, Determinism must leave them substantially unaltered. The problem is, as has been already said, to find out for what exactly all these things stand. To read wrong meanings into the facts of life, and then to declare that the facts cease to exist if the meanings are corrected, is unphilosophical petulance.

It is, indeed, quite open to the Determinist to meet these grave fears as to the consequences of Determinism with a denial that morality is vitally concerned with the question of whether man's "will" be "free" or not. The question of Determinism may enter into the subject of how to develop character along desirable lines; and, apart from Determinism, it is difficult to see how there can

be anything like a scientific cultivation of character. But the fact of morality and the value of morality are not bound up with whether conduct be the expression of theoretically calculable factors, or whether it is, on the one side, determined by a self which originates its own impulses. Determinism or no Determinism, murder, to take an extreme illustration, is never likely to become an every-day occupation in human society. Neither can any other action that is obviously injurious to the well-being of society be practised beyond certain well-defined limits. The laws of social health operate to check socially injurious actions, as the laws of individual health operate to check injurious conduct in dietary or in hygiene. Determinists and Indeterminists, as may easily be observed, manifest a fairly uniform measure of conduct, and whatever variations from the normal standard each displays cannot well be put down to their acceptance or rejection of Determinism.

The real nature of morality is best seen if one asks oneself the question, "What is morality?" Let us imagine the human race reduced to a single individual. What would then be the scope and character of morality? It is without question that a large part of our moral rules would lose all meaning. Theft, murder, unchastity, slander, etc., would be without meanings, for the simple reason that there would be none against whom such offences could be committed. Would there be any moral laws or moral feelings left? Would there even be a man left under such conditions? One might safely query both statements. For if we take away

from this solitary individual all that social culture and intercourse have given him—language, knowledge, habits both mental and moral, all, in short, that has been developed through the agency of the social medium—man, as we know him, disappears, and a mere animal is left in his place. Even the feeling that a man has a duty to himself, and that to realize his highest possibilities is the most imperative of moral obligations, is only an illustration of the same truth. For very little analysis serves to show that even this derives its value from the significance of the individual to the social structure.

Morality, then, is wholly a question of relationship. Not whether my actions spring from a self-determined "will" or even whether they are the inevitable consequent of preceding conditions makes them moral or immoral, but their influence in forwarding or retarding certain ideal social relations. The rightness or wrongness of an action lies in its consequences. Whether one is of the Utilitarian or other school of morals does not substantially affect the truth of this statement. Action without consequences—assuming its possibility—would have no moral significance whatever. And consequences remain whether we accept or reject Determinism. Determinism cannot alter or regulate the consequences of actions, it can only indicate their causes and their results. What a science of morals is really concerned with is, objectively, the consequences of actions, and subjectively the feelings that lead to their performance. When a science of morals has determined what actions best promote desirable relations between human beings, and what

states of mind are most favourable to the performance of such actions, its task as a science of morals is concluded. The genesis of such states of mind belongs to psychology, just as to sociology belong the creation and maintenance of such social conditions as will best give them expression and actuality.

The question of the moral consequences of Determinism is not, therefore, discussed because we believe there is any relevancy in the issue thus raised, but solely because it is raised, and not to deal with it may create a prejudice against Determinism. Many of those who quite admit the scientific character of Determinism, yet insist on the necessity for some sort of Indeterminism in the region of morals. Professor William James, for instance, admits that a profitable study of mental phenomena is impossible unless we postulate Determinism (*Prin. Psych.* ii. 573). But having admitted this, and in fact illustrated it through the whole of his two volumes, his next endeavour is to find a place for "free-will" as a "moral postulate." The region of morals is thus made to play the part of a haven of refuge for illegitimate and unscientific theories, a kind of workhouse for all mental vagrants found at large without visible means of support. The moral postulate which is to reinstate "Free-Will," is that "What ought to be can be, and that bad acts cannot be fated, but that good ones must be possible in their place." In a writer usually so clear this somewhat ambiguous deliverance is far more indicative of a desire to befriend an oppressed theory than of the possession of any good evidence in its behalf.

The matter really turns upon what is meant by "ought" and "possible." It has already been pointed out that if by "possible" it is meant that although one thing actually occurs, another thing—a different thing—might have occurred without any alteration in the accompanying conditions, the statement is not only untrue in fact, but it is inconceivable as possibly true. And if it does not mean this, then Professor James is merely stating what every Determinist most cheerfully endorses. But in that case the "possibility" gives no support whatever to the Indeterminist. Further, Professor James says that Determinism is a clear and seductive conception so long as one "stands by the great scientific postulate that the world must be one unbroken fact, and that prediction of all things without exception must be ideally, even if not actually, possible." On which one may enquire, how prediction could be at all possible unless, given the co-operating conditions, a definite and particular result is inevitable? But if prediction be possible—and the whole power of science lies in its power of prediction—what becomes of the value of "possibility" to the Indeterminist? Is it any more than an expression of our ignorance of the power of particular factors, and a consequent ignorance of their resultant?

To say that certain things "ought" to be, or that one "ought" to act in this or that particular manner, are common expressions, and within limits, relevant and intelligible expressions. But "ought" here clearly stands for no more than ideal conception. Its reference is to the future,

not to the past. It does not imply a belief that things could have resulted other than those which actually did result, but a belief that given a suitable alteration in the conditions different results might ensue in the future. When, for example, I say that men ought to think wisely, I do not affirm either that all men do think wisely, or that foolish men can do so without some change in their mental make-up. I merely eliminate all those conditions that make for unwise thinking, leaving wise thinking as the only possible result. That is, recognizing that from different conditions different consequences will follow, in imagination, all forces that are inimical to the ideal end are eliminated. We say that no man ought to commit murder, and yet if we take as an illustration the congenital homicide, no one can assert that in his case, at least, anything but murder is possible, given favourable conditions for its perpetration. Or if it is said that congenital homicide is a purely pathological case, it may surely be asserted that the same general considerations apply to cases that are not classified as pathological. The more we know of the criminal's heredity, environment, and education, the more clearly it is seen that his deeds result from the inter-action of these factors, and that these must be modified if we are reasonably to expect any alteration in his conduct. In fact, the criminal—or the saint—being what he is as the result of the inter-action of possibly calculable factors is the essential condition towards making "the prediction of all things" ideally, if not actually possible. In saying, then, that a man



ought not to do wrong, we are only saying that our ideal of a perfect man eliminates the idea of wrong-doing, and that our imagination is powerful enough to construct a human character to which wrong-doing shall be alien.

The fallacy here is due to a confusion of the actual with the desirable. If we are looking to the past we are bound to say that "ought" is meaningless, because what has been is the only thing that could have been. Thus it is meaningless to say that a piece of string capable of withstanding a strain of half a hundredweight ought to have withstood a strain of half a ton. It is equally absurd to say that a man ought to have withstood the germ of malarial fever, when his constitution rendered him susceptible to attack. Both of these instances will be readily admitted. Is it, then, any more reasonable to say that a man ought to have withstood a temptation to drunkenness, or theft, or cruelty—in the sense that given his nature he *could* have withstood it—when all the circumstances of character, heredity, and environment made for his downfall? We say that certain considerations "ought" to have restrained Jones because they were enough to restrain Smith. Are we, then, to conclude that Smith and Jones are so much alike—are, in fact, identical in character—that the same forces will influence each in the same manner and to the same degree? The assumption is obviously absurd. What ought to have happened with Smith and Jones, bearing in mind all the conditions of the problem, is what did happen. What ought to happen to Smith and Jones

in the future will be equally dependent upon the extent to which the character of the two becomes modified. In this sense our conception of what "ought" to be in the future will guide us as to the nature of the influences we bring to bear upon Smith and Jones. We believe that good actions may be possible in the future where bad ones occurred in the past, because we see that a change of conditions may produce the desired result. The "moral postulate," therefore, does not contain anything, or imply anything, in favour of Indeterminism. It does assert that certain things ought to be, but it can only realize this by recognizing, and acting upon the recognition, that just as certain forces in the past have issued in certain results, so a modification in the nature or incidence of these forces will produce a corresponding modification of conduct in the future. Whatever else there appears to be in the "ought" is a mere trick of the imagination; and the surprising thing is that a writer of the calibre of Professor James should not have been perfectly alive to this.

A cruder form of the same position, although introducing other issues, was upheld by Dr. Martineau in the categorical statement, "either free-will is a fact, or moral judgment a delusion." His reason for this remarkable statement is:—

"We could never condemn one turn of act or thought did we not believe the agent to have command of another; and just in proportion as we perceive, in his temperament or education or circumstances, the certain preponderance of

particular suggestions, and the near approach to an inner necessity, do we criticize him rather as a natural object than as a responsible being, and deal with his aberrations as maladies instead of sins."\*

Well, human nature might easily have been nearer perfection than it is had moral aberrations been treated as maladies rather than sins, and one certainly would not have felt greater regret had judges and critics always been capable of rising to this level of judgment. Social, political, and religious malevolence might not have received the gratification and support it has received had this been the rule of judgment and the guide to methods of treatment, but our social consciousness would have been of a superior texture than is now the case. And one may ask whether there is any human action conceivable for which an adequate cause cannot be found in temperament or education or circumstances, or in a combination of the three? It would tax any one's ingenuity to name an action that lies outside the scope of these influences. Temperament, education, circumstances, are the great and controlling conditions of human action, and only in proportion as this is recognized and acted upon do we approach a science of human nature and begin to realize methods of profitable modification.

Against Determinism Dr. Martineau argues that "the moral life dwells exclusively in the voluntary

\**Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii. p. 41.

sphere," and also that "impulses of spontaneous action do not constitute character." The first of these statements is at least very debatable, although it may turn upon a matter of definition. But the second statement is distinctly inaccurate. One may assert the exact opposite, and instead of saying that the impulses of spontaneous action do not constitute character, argue that they are the truest indications of character. Of course, from one point of view, all that a man does, whether it be spontaneous or reflective, must be equally the expression of the whole man. But from another point of view the more permanent and enduring characteristics of a man may be overborne by a passing flood of emotion or by a casual combination of unusual circumstances. By these means an habitually mean man may be roused to acts of generosity, an habitual thief roused to acts of honesty. Long reflection may cause a person to decide this or that, when his spontaneous impulses are in the contrary direction. And while these reflections and floods of emotion are equally with the spontaneous impulses part of a given personality, yet it will hardly be disputed that the latter are the more deeply seated, will express themselves in a more uniform manner, and are thus a truer and more reliable index to the character of the person with whom we are dealing.

How far we are to accept morality as dwelling exclusively in the voluntary, that is the intentional, sphere, is, as I have said, largely a matter of definition. We may so define morality that it shall cover only intentional acts, in which case the state-

ment must be accepted, or we can define morality in a wider sense, as covering all action by means of which desirable relations between people are maintained, in which case the statement is not true. For we should then be committed to the curious position that all moral development tends to make man less moral. To have the quality of voluntariness an act must be consciously performed with a particular end in view. But a large part of the more important functions of life do not come under this category, while a still larger portion are only semi-voluntary. The whole set of instincts that cluster round the family, the feelings which urge human beings to seek others' society, and which are the essential conditions of all social phenomena, do not properly come under the head of volition. Our conduct in any of these directions may easily be justified by reason, but it would be absurd to argue that there is any intentional choice involved.

Moreover, the chief aim of education, of the moralization of character, is to divest actions of their quality of reflectiveness or intention. Our aim here is so to fashion character that it will unquestioningly and instinctively place itself on the right side. This is a force that operates on all individuals more or less, and from the cradle to the grave. Family influences curb and fashion the egotism of the child until there is an unconscious and often unreasoning adherence to the family circle. Social influences continue the work and train the individual into an instinctive harmony, more or less complete with the structure of the society to which he belongs. The mere repetition

of a particular action involves the formation of a habit, and habit is meaningless in the absence of a modified nerve structure which reacts in a special manner. Persistence in right action, therefore, no matter how consciously it may be performed in its initial stages, inevitably passes over into unconscious or instinctive action. And let it be noted, too, that it is only when this change has been brought about that a person can be said to be a thoroughly moralized character. It is not the man who does right after a long internal struggle that is most moral, but the one with whom doing right is the most imperative of organic necessities. We praise the man who does right after struggle, but chiefly because of our admiration at the triumph of right over wrong, or because his weakness cries for support, or because he has in him the making of a more perfect character. But to place him as the superior of one whose right doing is the efflorescence of his whole nature is to misunderstand the ethical problem. And equally to confine morality to merely voluntary or intentional action is to truncate the sphere of morals to an extent that would meet with the approval of very few writers on ethics. In brief, one may not merely say with Lessing, "Determinism has nothing to fear from the side of morals," one may add that it is only on the theory of Determinism that the moralization of character becomes a rational possibility.



## V.

### PROFESSOR JAMES ON "THE DILEMMA OF DETERMINISM."

WE have seen in what has gone before how much of the case for Free-Will is based upon the wrong use of language, and upon a display of petulance arising from the degree to which it is assumed that the universe ought to fulfil certain *a priori* expectations. In this last respect the Volitionist behaves as if he were on a kind of shopping excursion, with full liberty to purchase or reject the goods brought out for inspection. Both of these points are well illustrated in an apology for Indeterminism offered by Professor William James, and although in examining his argument it may be necessary to repeat in substance some of the arguments already used, this will not be without its value in enabling the reader to realize the shifts to which the defender of Free-Will is compelled to resort. In justice to Professor James, however, it is only fair to point out that it is not quite clear that he is thoroughly convinced of the position he sees fit to state. Much of his argument reads as though he were merely stating a speculation that might prove valuable, but which might also turn out valueless. Still, whatever conviction he has, or had, appears to lean to the side of Indeterminism, and I shall accordingly deal with his argument as though he were quite convinced of its soundness.

In his chief work, *The Principles of Psychology*, Professor James took up the perfectly sane position that a man would be foolish not to espouse "the great scientific postulate" that the prediction of all things without exception must be possible, and drew a proper distinction between what is ideally possible—that is to complete knowledge—and what is actually possible to incomplete knowledge. In a later deliverance he, for the time at least, forsakes this position and champions a case which rests for its conerence very largely upon the neglect of those precautions previously insisted on.\* To suit the necessities of the argument the Determinist is made to say things that I think few, if any, determinists ever dreamed of saying, while certain leading words are used with a meaning obviously framed to meet the requirements of the case.

At the outset of his essay Professor James remarks that if a certain formula—in this case the Determinist formula—"for expressing the nature of the world violates my moral demands, I shall feel as free to throw it overboard, or at least to doubt it, as if it disappointed my demand for uniformity of sequence." And he proceeds to argue that all our scientific "laws" are ideal constructions, built up in order to satisfy certain demands of our nature. Uniformity in nature is thus as much a formula framed to this end as is Free-Will. "If this be admitted," he says, "we can debate on even terms."

\*See the lecture on "The Dilemma of Determinism" in the volume *The Will to Believe, and other Essays*, London; 1903.

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Unfortunately for the Professor's argument the two instances are not analogous—not, at least, in the direction required. The sense of causality is not something that is innate in human nature. Children at an early age hardly possess it, and primitive man has it in only a very vague manner. The conviction that all things are bound together in terms of causation is one that belongs, even to-day, to the educated, thoughtful mind. At any rate it is a conviction that has been forced upon the human mind by the sheer pressure of experience. It is a growth consequent upon the mind's intercourse with the objective universe. And its validity is not called into question. On the other hand, this assumed 'moral demand' for "Free-Will" is the very point in dispute. Whether there is such a demand, and if so is it a legitimate one, are the questions upon which the discussion turns. And it will not do for Professor James to claim Free-Will in the name of certain "moral demands" and reserve the right to throw overboard any theory that does not grant them. Man's moral nature, equally with his intellectual nature, must in the last resort yield to facts. It will not do to exalt into a moral instinct what may be no more than a personal idiosyncrasy. There is certainly no more than this in such expressions as "something must be fatally unreasonable, absurd, and wrong in the world," or "I deliberately refuse to keep on terms of loyalty with the universe," if certain things turn out to be true. Such phrases are completely out of place in a scientific enquiry. The universe will remain what it is whether we call it absurd or rational,

and may even survive the raising of the standard of revolt by so eminent a psychologist as Professor James, to whom we would commend, were he still alive, Schopenhauer's profound remark that there are no moral phenomena, only moral interpretations of phenomena.

What, now, is the insuperable dilemma which Professor James places before upholders of Determinism? The whole of it turns out to be little more than a play upon the words "possible" and "actual." Determinism, he says, professes that "those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and decree (Why 'appoint' and 'decree'? Why not the impersonal word 'determine?') what the other parts shall be." The future is determined by the past; and given the past, only one future is possible. Indeterminism says that "the parts have a certain amount of loose play on one another, so that the laying down of one of them does not necessarily determine what the others shall be." Thus, still following Professor James's exposition, given a special instance, both sides admit the occurrence of a volition. The Determinist asserts that no other volition could have occurred. The Indeterminist asserts that another volition might have occurred, other things remaining the same. And, asks the Professor, can science tell us which is correct? His reply is, No. "How can any amount of assurance that something actually happened give us the least grain of information as to whether another thing might or might not have happened in its place? Only facts can be proved by other facts. With things that are

possibilities and not facts, facts have no concern."

The position may be made clearer by taking the Professor's own illustration. When, he says, I leave this lecture hall I may go home *via* Divinity Avenue, or traverse Oxford Street. It is a matter of chance which route is selected. But assume that by some miracle, after having walked down Divinity Avenue, ten minutes of time are annihilated, and reaching the Hall door again Oxford Street is the route selected. Spectators thus have two alternative universes. One universe with the Professor walking through Divinity Avenue, the other with him walking through Oxford Street. If the spectators are Determinists they will believe only one universe to have been from eternity possible. But, asks Professor James, looking outwardly at these two universes, can anyone say which is the accidental and which is the necessary one? "In other words, either universe *after the fact* and once there would, to our means of observation and understanding, appear just as rational as the other." There is no means by which we can distinguish chance from a rational necessity. A universe which allows a certain loose play of the parts is as rational as one which submits to the most rigid determinism.

Before dealing with the above, it is necessary to take another phrase on which much of the above argument depends. Professor James says that the stronghold of the Determinist sentiment is antipathy to the idea of "Chance," and chance is a notion not to be entertained by any sane mind. And the sting, he says, seems to rest on the

assumption that chance is something positive, and if a thing happens by chance it must needs be irrational and preposterous. But I am not aware that any scientific Determinist ever used "chance" as being a positive term at all. Certainly the last thing the present writer would dream of doing would be to predicate chance of any portion of the objective universe whatsoever. The only legitimate use of the word is in reference to *the state of our knowledge concerning phenomena*. To say that a thing chanced, or happened by chance, is only saying that we are not aware of the causes that produced it. We say nothing of the thing itself, we only express the state of our mind in relation to it.

Professor James says all you mean by "chance" is that a thing is not guaranteed, it may fall out otherwise. Not guaranteed by our knowledge about the thing, certainly; in any other sense, his definition seems invented for the express purpose of bolstering up his hypothesis. For, he says, a chance thing means that the general system of things has no hold on it. It appears in relation to other things, but it escapes their determining influence, and appears as "a free gift." Thus whether he walked down Divinity Avenue or Oxford Street was a matter of chance; and the future of the world is full of similar chances—events that may take one of several forms, either of which is consistent with the whole.


We now have the essence of Professor James's case, and can consider it in detail. First of all we may note the curiously double sense in which



Professor James uses the word "fact" and the agility with which he skips from one meaning to another, as it suits his argument. In a broad and general sense a mental fact is as much a fact as any other fact. A man riding on horseback is a fact. My vision or conception of a horse with the head of a man is equally a fact, though nothing like it exists in nature. We should discriminate between the two by saying that one is a mental fact strictly relative to a particular mind, the other is an objective fact relative to all minds normally constituted. Now science does not deny possibilities as *mental facts*. But it would be a very queer science indeed that allowed all sorts of possibilities of a given group of phenomena *under identical conditions*. Like "chance," the possibilities of the Universe are strictly relative to our knowledge concerning it. If opposite things appear equally possible, it is only because we are not sufficiently conversant with the processes to say which thing is certain. A universe with Professor James walking down Divinity Avenue appears as orderly and as natural as one with him parading Oxford Street. But this is because we cannot unravel the complex conditions that may determine the selection of one route or the other. Or if it be said in reply, that the walker is unaware of any choice in the matter, the answer is that there is present the desire to get away from the lecture hall and arrive at home, and this is strong enough to make the choice of means to that end unimportant. If the choice lay between walking down a sunlit street or wading through a mile of water, five feet deep, while the

latter would still remain a possibility, since it could be done were the inducement to do it strong enough, there is not much doubt as to what the choice would actually be.

The complete reply therefore to Professor James's illustration is that from the standpoint of mere possibility, bearing in mind the proper significance of possibility, opposite alternatives may be equally real. We can, that is, conceive conditions under which a certain thing may occur, and we can conceive another set of conditions under which exactly the opposite may occur. And either alternative presents us with a universe that is equally "rational," because in either case we vary the co-operating conditions in order to produce the imagined consequence. But given a complete knowledge of all the co-operating conditions, and not only do two views of the universe cease to be equally rational, but one of them ceases to be even conceivable. For let us note that the resultant of *any* calculation is no more and no less than a synthesis of the factors that are included in the calculation. If we do not understand the factors included in a given synthesis it will be a matter of "chance" what the resultant may be. But if we do understand the nature of the factors, and the consequence of their synthesis, possibility and actuality become convertible terms. Finally, whether a man on leaving a lecture hall turns to the right or the left appears, under ordinary conditions, equally rational and natural only because we are aware that it may be a matter of indifference which direction he takes, and in that case his action



will be governed by the simple desire to get away, or to get to a particular spot. It is a simple deduction from experience presented by Professor James in a needlessly confusing manner.

The next, and practically the only example cited by Professor James to prove that this world is a world of "chances," is concerned with a question of morals. We constantly, he says, have occasion to make "judgments of regret." In illustration of this, he cites the case of a particularly brutal murder, and adds, "We feel that, although a perfect mechanical fit to the rest of the universe, it is a bad moral fit, and that something else would really have been better in its place." But "calling a thing bad means, if it means anything at all, that the thing ought not to be, that something else ought to be in its stead." If Determinism denies this it is defining the universe as a place "in which what ought to be is impossible," and this lands us in pessimism, or if we are to escape pessimism we can only do so by abandoning the judgment of regret. But if our regrets are necessitated nothing else can be in their place, and the universe is what it was before—a place in which what ought to be appears impossible. Murder and treachery cannot be good without regret being bad, regret cannot be good without murder and treachery being bad. As both, however, are foredoomed, something must be fatally wrong and absurd in the world.

Now, I must confess all this seems a deal of bother concerning a fairly simple matter. Indeed, Professor James seems to be engaged in raising a dust and then complaining of the murkiness of the

atmosphere. Coming from a writer of less standing I might, in view of what has been said elsewhere in this essay, have left the reply to the careful reader's understanding of the subject. But from so eminent a psychologist as William James, silence might well be construed as deterministic inability to reply to the position laid down.

In the first place, I may be pardoned for again reminding the reader that, in this connection, "ought" stands upon precisely the same level as "possible." Whether we say that a man ought to do a certain thing, or that it is possible for him to do a certain thing, we are making identical statements, for no one would dream of saying that a man ought to do that which it is impossible for him to perform. When we say that murder and treachery ought not to be, we do not imply—if we use language properly—that these are not as much part of the cosmic order, and as much the expression of co-operating conditions, as are kindness and loyalty. It is saying no more than that in our judgment human nature may be so trained and conditioned as to practise neither murder nor treachery. We are expressing a judgment as to what our ideal of human nature is, and our ideal of what human nature should be is based upon what experience has taught us concerning its possibilities. Man's "judgment of regret" is justifiable and admirable, not because he recognizes that the past could have been different from what it was, but because it furnishes him with the requisite experience for a better direction of action in the future, and because the feeling of regret is itself

one of the determining conditions that will decide conduct in the future.

"The question," says Professor James, "is of things, not of eulogistic names for them." With this I cordially agree; but in that case what are we to make of the following:—

"The only consistent way of representing . . . a world whose parts may affect one another through their conduct being either good or bad is the indeterminate way. What interest, zest, or excitement can there be in achieving the right way, unless we are enabled to feel that the wrong way is also a possible and a natural way—nay, more, a menacing and an imminent way? And what sense can there be in condemning ourselves for taking the wrong way, unless we need have done nothing of the sort, unless the right way was open to us as well? I cannot understand the willingness to act, no matter how we feel, without the belief that acts are really good or bad. I cannot understand the belief that an act is bad, without regret at its happening. I cannot understand regret without the admission of real genuine possibilities in the world."

Eliminate from this all that is matter of common agreement between Determinists and Indeterminists, and what have we left but sheer verbal confusion? The pleasurable feeling that results from a sense of achievement is real no matter what are the lines on which the universe is constructed.

One might as reasonably ask, Why feel a greater interest in a first-class orchestral performance, than in the harmonic outrages of a hurdy-gurdy, since both are, from the physical side, vibratory phenomena? And is it not clear, to repeat a truth already emphasized, that a most important factor in our condemning ourselves for doing a wrong action is the fact that we have done so. It is one of the determining conditions of doing better actions in future. Of course, Professor James cannot understand the belief that an act is bad, without regret at its happening. Neither can anyone else, for the simple reason that one involves the other. The statement is as much a truism as is the one that we can have no willingness to act unless we believe that acts are either good or bad. Equally true is it that regret implies real possibilities in the world—not always, though, for we may regret death or the radiation into extra terrestrial space of solar energy without believing that the prevention of either is possible. But our possibilities in relation to conduct do not, as the argument implies, relate to the past, but to the future. Indeed, the sense of possibility would be morally worthless were it otherwise.

Finally, and this brings me to what is one of the cardinal weaknesses of so much of the writing on psychology, Professor James's argument is vitiated by non-recognition of the fact that regret and satisfaction, praise and blame, with most of the cardinal moral qualities, are *social* in their origin and application. They represent the reaction of our social feelings against anti-social conduct, or



their expression of satisfaction at conduct of an opposite character. They are consequently the creations, not of an indwelling “will,” but of an outdwelling social relationship. They are not impressed by the “ego” upon the world, they are impressed by the world upon the ego. Character is not something that each individual brings ready fashioned to the service of society ; it is something that society itself creates. It has been fashioned by countless generations of social evolution, and, in the main, that evolution has of necessity placed due emphasis upon those intellectual and moral qualities on which social welfare depends.

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## VI.

### THE NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

IF Hume was not right in asserting that a few intelligible definitions would put an end to the Free-Will controversy, his error lay in assuming a greater receptivity of mind than most people possess. For it may safely be asserted that once the legitimate meanings of the terms employed are acknowledged, and they are properly applied to the matter in dispute, it may be shown that the opponents of Determinism have been beating the air. The Determinism they attack is not the Determinism that is either professed or defended. The consequences they forecast follow only from a distorted, and often meaningless, use of the terms employed. Instead of the Determinist denying the moral and mental value of certain qualities of which the Indeterminist announces himself the champion, he admits their value, gives them a definite meaning, and proves that it is only by an assumption of the truth of the cardinal principle of Determinism that they have any reality. This has already been shown to be true in the case of Freedom, Choice, Deliberation, etc.; it remains to pursue the same method with such conceptions as praise and blame or punishment and reward, and responsibility.

The charge is, again, that Determinism robs

praise and blame and responsibility of all meaning, and reduces them to mere verbal expressions which some may mistake for the equivalents of reality, but which clearer thinkers will estimate at their true worth. What is the use of praising or blaming if each one does what heredity, constitution, and environment compels? Why punish a man for being what he is? Why hold him responsible for the expressions of a character provided for him, and for the influence of an environment which he had no part in forming? So the string of questions run on. None of them, it may safely be said, would ever be asked if all properly realized the precise meaning and application of the terms employed. For as with the previous terms examined, it is an acceptance of Indeterminism that would rob these words of all value. Rationally conceived they are not only consonant with Determinism, but each of them implies it.

Of the four terms mentioned above—Praise, Blame, Punishment, and Responsibility, the cardinal and governing one is the last. It will be well, therefore, to endeavour to fix this with some degree of clearness.

To commence with we may note that in contradistinction to "freedom" where the testimony of consciousness is illegitimately invoked, a consciousness of responsibility is essential to its existence. A person in whom it was manifestly impossible to arouse such a consciousness would be unhesitatingly declared to be irresponsible. There is here, consequently, both the fact of responsibility and our consciousness of it that calls

for explanation. And both require for an adequate explanation a larger area than is offered by mere individual psychology. Indeed, so long as we restrict ourselves to the individual we cannot understand either the fact or the consciousness of responsibility. By limiting themselves in this manner some Determinists have been led to deny responsibility altogether. The individual, they have said, does not create either his own organism or its environment, and consequently all reasonable basis for responsibility disappears. To which there is the effective reply that the datum for responsibility is found in the nature of the organism and in the possibility of its being affected by certain social forces, and not in the absolute origination of its own impulses and actions. It is playing right into the hands of the Indeterminist to deny so large and so important a social phenomenon as responsibility. And to the Indeterminist attack, that if action is the expression of heredity, organism, and environment, there is no room for responsibility, there is the effective reply that it is precisely because the individual's actions are the expression of all the forces brought to bear upon him that he may be accounted responsible. The Determinist has often been too ready to take the meanings and implications of words from his opponent, instead of checking the sense in which they were used.

The general sense of responsibility—omitting all secondary meanings—is that of accountability, to be able to reply to a charge, or to be able to answer a claim made upon us. This at once

gives us the essential characteristic of responsibility, and also stamps it as a phenomenon of social ethics. A man living on a desert island would not be responsible, unless we assume his responsibility to deity; and even here we have the essential social fact—relation to a person—reintroduced. It is our relations to others, that and the influence of our actions upon others, combined with the possibility of our natures being affected by the praise or censure of the social body to which we belong, which sets up the fact of responsibility. Conduct creates a social reaction, good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable, and the reacting judgment of society awakens in each of us a consciousness of responsibility, more or less acute, and more or less drastic, to society at large. The individual sees himself in the social mirror. His nature is fashioned by the social medium, his personal life becomes an expression of the social life. Just as the social conscience, in the shape of a legal tribunal, judges each for actions that are past, so the larger social conscience, as expressed in a thousand and one different forms, customs, and associations, judges us for those desires and dispositions that may result in action in the future. Responsibility as a phenomenon of social psychology is obvious, educative, inescapable, and admirable. Responsibility as a phenomenon of individual psychology, whether from the Determinist or Indeterminist point of view, is positively meaningless.

Taking, then, responsibility as a fact of social life, with its true significance of accountability, let

us see its meaning on deterministic lines. For the sake of clearness we will first take legal responsibility as illustrating the matter. In law a man is accounted guilty provided he knows the law he is breaking, and also that he is capable of appreciating the consequences of his actions! A further consideration of no mean importance is that the consequences attending the infringement of the law are assumed to be sufficiently serious to counterbalance the inducements to break the regulation. And as all citizens are assumed to know the law, we may confine our attention to the last two aspects. What, then, is meant by ability to appreciate consequences? There can be no other meaning than the capacity to create an ideal presentment of the penalties attaching to certain actions. Every promise of reward or threat of punishment assumes this, and assumes also that provided the ideal presentment is strong enough, certain general results will follow. It is on this principle alone that punishments are proportioned to offences, and that certain revisions of penalties take place from time to time. Negatively the same thing is shown by the fact that young children, idiots, and lunatics are not legally held responsible for their actions. The ground here is that the power to represent ideally the full consequences of actions is absent, or operates in an abnormal manner. Moreover, the whole line of proof to establish insanity in a court of law is that a person is not amenable to certain desires and impulses in the same manner as are normally constituted people.



Substantially the same thing is seen if we take the fact of responsibility in non-legal matters. A very young child, incapable of ideally representing consequences, is not considered a responsible being. An older child has a limited responsibility in certain simple matters. As it grows older, and growth brings with it the power of more fully appreciating the consequence of actions, its responsibility increases in the home, in the school; in business, social, religious, and political circles it is held accountable for its conduct, in proportion as the power of estimating the consequences of actions is assumed. In other words, we assume not that there is at any stage an autonomous or self-directing "will" in operation, but that a particular quality of motive will operate at certain stages of mental development, and the whole of the educative process, in the home, the school, and in society, aims at making these motives effective. That is, the whole fact of responsibility assumes as a datum the very condition that the Indeterminist regards as destroying responsibility altogether. He argues that if action is the expression of character, responsibility is a farce. But it is precisely because action is the expression of character that responsibility exists. When the law, or when society, calls a man to account for something he has done, it does not deny that had he possessed a different character he would have acted differently. It does not assert that at the time of action he could have helped doing what he did. Both may be admitted. What it does say is that having a character of such and such a kind certain things

are bound to follow. But inasmuch as that character may be modified by social opinion or social coercion, inasmuch as it will respond to certain influences brought to bear upon it, it is a responsible character, and so may be held accountable for its actions.

There is, therefore, nothing incompatible between Determinism and Responsibility. The incompatibility lies between Indeterminism and Responsibility. What meaning can we attach to it, on what ground can we call a person to account, if our calling him to account is not one of the considerations that will affect his conduct? Grant that a consciousness of responsibility decides how a person shall act, and the principle of Determinism is admitted. Deny that a consciousness of responsibility determines action, and the phrase loses all meaning and value. The difficulty arises, as has been said, by ignoring the fact that responsibility is of social origin, and in looking for an explanation in individual psychology. It would, of course, be absurd to make man responsible for being what he is, but so long as he is amenable to the pressure of normal social forces he is responsible or accountable for what he may be. Whatever his character be, so long as it has the capacity of being affected by social pressure, it is a responsible character. And this is the sole condition that makes responsibility intelligible.

Having said this, it is not difficult to see the place of punishment and reward, or praise and blame, in the Determinist scheme of things. Another word than punishment might be selected,

and one that would be without its unpleasant associations, but on the whole it is advisable perhaps to retain the word in order to see the nature of the problem clearly. Of course, punishment in the sense of the infliction of pain merely because certain actions have been committed, no Determinist would countenance. So far as punishment is inflicted in this spirit of sheer retaliation it serves only to gratify feelings of malevolence. A society that punishes merely to gratify resentment is only showing that it can be as brutal collectively as individuals can be singly. And if punishment begins and ends with reference to the past, then it is certainly revolting to inflict pain upon a person because he has done what education and organization impelled him to do. So far one can agree with Professor Sidgwick that when a man's conduct is "compared with a code, to the violation of which punishments are attached, the question whether he really could obey the rule by which he is judged is obvious and inevitable." But when he goes on to reply "If he could not, it seems contrary to our sense of justice to punish him," the reply is, Not if the code is one that normal human nature can obey, and the individual one who can be modified in a required direction in both his own interest and the interest of others. For if our punishment is prospective instead of retrospective, or at least retrospective only so far as to enable us to understand the character of the individual with whom we are dealing, and using punishment as one of the means of securing a desirable modification of character, then punish-

ment is merged in correction, and receives a complete justification upon Deterministic lines.

The problem is comparatively simple. Actions being decided by motives, the problem with a socially defective character is how to secure the prevalence of desires that will issue in desirable conduct. A man steals; the problem then is, How can we so modify the character of which stealing is the expression, so that we may weaken the desire to steal and strengthen feelings that will secure honesty of action? On the lower plane society resorts to threats of pains and penalties, so that when the desire to steal arises again, the knowledge that certain measures will be taken against the offender will arrest this desire. This is one of the principal grounds on which a measure like the First Offenders Act is based. On a higher plane the approval and respect of society serve to awaken a positive liking for honesty and the formation of desirable mental habits. Praise and blame rest upon a precisely similar basis. Man being the socialized animal he is, the approbation and disapprobation of his fellows must always exert considerable influence on his conduct. The memory of censure passed or of praise bestowed acts as one of the many influences that will determine conduct when the critical moment for action arrives. Man does not always consciously put the question of what his social circle will think of his actions, but this feeling rests upon a deeper and more secure basis than that of consciousness. It has been, so to speak, worked into his nature by all the generations of social life that have preceded his existence,

and to escape it means to put off all that is distinctly human in his character. Every time we praise or blame an action we are helping to mould character, for both will serve as guides in the future. And it is just because at the moment of action a person "could not help doing" what he did that there is any reasonable justification for either approval or censure. Social approval and disapproval become an important portion of the environment to which the human being must perforce adapt himself.

What use could there be in punishing or blaming a man if his actions are determined, not by realizable motives, but by a mysterious will that in spite of our endeavours remains uninfluenced? If neither the promise nor the recollection of punishment creates feelings that will determine conduct, then one might as well whip the wind. Its only purpose is to gratify our own feelings of anger or malevolence. It is equally futile to look for the cause of wrong-doing in education, organization, or environment. For in proportion as we recognize any or all of these factors as determining conduct we are deserting the Indeterminist position, and relinquishing the "freedom" of the will. If Indeterminism be true we are forced to believe that although as a consequence of ill-conduct evil feelings may arise with greater frequency, yet they must be wholly ineffective as influencing action. It cannot even be argued that certain motives offer stronger attraction than others to the will, for this in itself would be a form of determinism. There is no middle course. Either the "will" remains absolutely uninfluenced

by threat of punishment or desire for praise, serenely indifferent to the conflict of desires, and proof against the influence of education, or it forms a part of the causative sequence and the truth of Determinism is admitted. You cannot at the same time hold that man does not act in accordance with the strongest motive, and decide that the "will" maintains its freedom by deciding which motive shall be the strongest—its own determination not being the product of previous training. One need, indeed, only state the Indeterminist position plainly to see its inherent absurdity.

If ever in any case the argument *ad absurdum* was applicable it is surely here. It may safely be said that the larger part of the life of each of us is passed in anticipating the future in the light of experience. But if "Free-Will" be a fact, on what ground can we forecast the future. If motives do not determine conduct, any prophecy of what certain people may do in a given situation is futile. The will being indetermined, what they have done in the past is no guide as to what they will do in the future. If motives did not decide then they will not decide now. Whether we read backward or forward makes no difference. We have no right to say that the actions of certain statesmen prove them to have been animated by the desire for wealth or power. That would imply Determinism. We cannot say that because a murder has been committed a certain person who bore the deceased ill-will is rightly suspected. This is assuming that conduct is determined by motives. If we see a person jump into the river, we have no right to argue that depressed



health, or financial worry, or impending social disgrace, has caused him to commit suicide. The mother may as easily murder her child as nurse it. The workman may labour as well for a bare pittance as for a comfortable wage. A man outside a house in the early hours of the morning, armed with a dark lantern and a jemmy, may have no desire to commit a burglary. A person with a game bag and a gun furnishes no reliable data for believing that he intends to shoot something. In all of these cases, and in hundreds of others, if "free-will" be a fact we have no right to argue from actions to motives, or infer motives from actions. Motives do not rule, and we are witnessing the uncaused and unaccountable vagaries of an autonomous will.

It is sometimes said that no matter how convinced a Determinist one may be, one always acts as though the will were free. This, so far from being true, is the reverse of what really happens. In all the affairs of life people of all shades of opinion concerning Determinism really act as though "Free-Will" had no existence. It would, indeed, be strange were it otherwise. Facts are more insistent than theories, and in the last resort it is the nature of things which determines the course of our actions. Nature, while permitting considerable latitude in matters of theory or opinion, allows comparatively little play in matters of conduct. And it may be asserted that a society which failed to acknowledge in its conduct the principle of Determinism would stand but small chance of survival. As a matter of fact, when it comes to practical work the theory of "Free-Will" is ignored and the theory of

Determinism acted upon. The unfortunate thing is that the maintenance of "Free-Will" in the sphere of opinion serves to check the wholesome application of the opposite principle. Theory is used to check action instead of serving its proper function as a guide to conduct.

Still, it is instructive to note to what extent in the sphere of practice the principle of Determinism is admitted. In dealing with the drink question, for instance, temperance reformers argue that a diminution in the number of public-houses, and the creation of opportunities for healthy methods of enjoyment, will diminish temptation and weaken the desire for alcoholic stimulants. In the training of children stress is rightly laid upon the importance of the right kind of associates, the power of education, and of healthy physical surroundings. With adults, the beneficial influences of fresh air, good food, well-built houses, open spaces, and healthy conditions of labour have become common-places of sociology. In every rational biography attention is paid to the formative influences of parents, friends, and general environment. Medical men seek the cause of frames of mind in nervous structure, and predisposition to physical, mental, and moral disease in heredity. Statisticians point to absolute uniformity of general human action under certain social conditions. Moralists point to the power of ideals on people's minds. Religious teachers emphasize the power of certain teachings in reducing particular habits. In all these cases no allowance whatever is made for the operation of an undetermined will. The motive theory of action may not be consciously in

the minds of all, but it is everywhere and at all times implied in practice.

In strict truth, we cannot undertake a single affair in life without making the assumption that people will act in accordance with certain motives, and that these in turn will be the outcome of specific desires. If I journey from here to Paris I unconsciously assume that certain forces—the desire to retain a situation, to earn a living, to satisfy a sense of duty—will cause all the officials connected with boat and train service to carry out their duties in a given manner. If I appeal for the protection of the police I am again counting upon certain motives influencing the official mind in a particular manner. All commercial transactions rest upon the same unconscious assumption. A merchant who places an order with a firm in Russia, America, or Japan, or who sends goods abroad, counts with absolute confidence upon certain desires and mental states so influencing a number of people with whom he has no direct connection, that they will co-operate in landing the goods at the point desired. Or if the goods are not transmitted as desired, it is not because the principle upon which he relied is invalid, but because other desires have operated in a more powerful manner. A general commanding an army acts on precisely the same principle. The ideal of duty, of the honour of the regiment, the desire for distinction, are all counted upon as being powerful enough to serve as motives that will cause men to join in battle, storm a risky position, or take part in a forlorn hope. History is read upon the same principle. The statement that Nero was cruel, that

Henry the Eighth was of an amatory nature, that Charles I. was tyrannical, or that Louis the Fifteenth was licentious, could not be made unless we argue that their actions imply the existence of certain motives. That the motive theory of the will is true is admitted in practice by all. The Indeterminist admits it even in his appeal to "Liberty." He is counting upon the desire for freedom (sociologically) as being strong enough to lead people to reject a theory which denies its applicability to morals.

Human nature becomes a chaos if Determinism is denied. Neither a science of human conduct nor of history is possible in its absence ; for both assume a fundamental identity of human nature beneath all the comparatively superficial distinctions of colour, creed, or national divisions. The determination of the influence of climate, food, inter-tribal or international relations, of the power of ideals—moral, religious, military, national, etc.—are all so many exercises in the philosophy of Determinism. In none of these directions do we make the least allowance for the operation of an uncaused "will." We say with absolute confidence that given a people with a military environment, and either its discomforts produce an anti-militarist feeling, or its glamour evokes a strong militarist feeling. So with all other consideration that comes before us. And as Determinism enables us to read and understand history and life, so it also provides a basis upon which we can work for reform. In the belief that certain influences will produce, in the main, a particular result, we can lay our plans and work

with every prospect of ultimate success. Instead of our best endeavours being left at the mercy of an undetermined "will," they take their place as part of the determining influences that are moulding human nature. Every action becomes a portion of the environment with which each has to deal. More, it becomes a portion of the agent's own environment, a part of that ideal world in which we all more or less live. And the heightened consciousness that every action leaves a certain residuum for either good or ill, supplies in itself one of the strongest incentives for the exercise of self-control and furnishes an unshakable basis for self-development.

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## VII.

### DETERMINISM AND CHARACTER.

IN spite of what has been said, it may be that a protest will still be raised by some on behalf of character. A man's character, it will be argued, is an alienable personal possession. What he does belongs to him in a sense that is peculiar to his personality. In many important instances his actions bear the stamp of individuality in so plain a manner that while we cannot predict what he will do, once it is done we recognize by the peculiar nature of the action that it must have been done by him and by none other. In painting, in music, in literature, and in many other walks of life, we are able to infer authorship by the personality stamped upon the production. Moreover, nothing that we can do or say will ever destroy the conviction that my actions are *mine*. They proceed from *me*; they are the expressions of *my* character; it is this feeling that induces me to plead guilty to the charge of responsibility, and this conviction remains after all argument has been urged. But, it is further asked, how can this be aught but an illusion if I am not the real and determining cause of my conduct? If I and my actions are the products of a converging series of calculable or indetermined forces, are we not compelled to dismiss this conviction as pure myth? Must I not conclude that I am no more the determining cause of my conduct than a stone determines whether it shall fall to the ground or not?



And is not the cultivation of character, therefore, an absurd futility?

Now although the Determinist will dissent from the conclusions of those who argue in this way, with a great deal of the argument he would agree; more than that, he would enforce the same line of reasoning as a legitimate inference from his own position. And he might also submit that it is only by an acceptance of the deterministic position that such reasoning can receive full justification.

What do we mean by character? Suppose we reply with T. H. Green by defining character as the way in which a man seeks self-satisfaction.\* We are next faced with the problem of accounting for the different ways in which self-satisfaction is sought. One man is a drunkard and another temperate, one is benevolent and another grasping, one is cruel and another kind; there are endless diversities of human conduct, and all come within the scope of Green's definition of character. We have to look farther and deeper. A satisfactory answer clearly cannot be found in the assumption that each person's actions proceed from an unfettered, autonomous will. The reason for the choice would still have to be discovered. Nor will it do to attribute the difference of choice to different environmental influences in which the "self" is placed. This would indeed be reducing the man to the level of a machine, or to a lower level still. And the same environmental influences do *not* produce identical results. This is one of the commonest

\**Works*, vol. ii. p. 142.

facts of daily experience. Stimulus from the environment is the essential condition of action, but the precise nature of the action elicited is an affair of the organism. If I am courageous by nature I shall stay and face a threatened danger. If I am cowardly I shall run away. Thus, while circumstances are the cause of my acting, how I shall act is in turn caused by my character, the net result being due to their interaction. This seems so obvious that it may well be accepted as a datum common to both parties in the dispute.

We may, then, freely grant the Indeterminist—what he foolishly assumes is inconsistent with the Deterministic position—that environment may be modified by character, that a man is not the creature of circumstances, if we restrict that word to external circumstances, as is so often done. A man, we will say, allowing for the influence of external circumstances, acts according to his character. The question then becomes, “What is his character? How does he acquire it?”\* And whence the varieties of character?” To these queries the only intelligible reply is that a man’s character represents his psychic heritage, as his body represents his physical heritage, both of them being subject to development and modification by post-natal influences. Each one thus brings a different psychic force, or a different character, to bear upon the world around him. He

\*Of course, the man and his character are not two distinct things. The character is the man. But it would involve needless circumlocution to insist on superfine distinctions, and it may even help to a comprehension of the argument to keep to familiar forms of speech.

is thus the author of his acts, not in the unintelligible sense of absolutely originating the sequence that proceeds from his actions, but in the rational sense of being that point in the sequence that is represented by his personality. And his actions bear the stamp of his personality because had his antecedents been different his actions would have varied accordingly. Each is properly judged in terms of character, because it is the character which determines the form taken by the reaction of the organism on the environment.

We may go even further than this and say that it is only actions which proceed from character that are properly the subject of moral judgment. Let us take a concrete illustration of this. A man distributes a large sum of money among the inhabitants of a town, some of it in the form of personal gifts among its needy inhabitants, the rest in endowing various institutions connected with its social and municipal life. Twelve months later he comes forward as candidate in a parliamentary election. The question of his donations at once comes up for judgment, and in defence he may plead that he was only invited to contest the seat after the money was given. How shall we determine what his motives were? Obviously by an appeal to his character. If he were well known as a wealthy person of recognized benevolent disposition, it would be argued that while his candidature would inevitably reap benefit from his donations it was highly probable that in giving the money he was only acting as one would expect him to act. If, on the other hand, he was well known as a person of a mean and grasping

disposition, it would be concluded that the donation was an attempt to bribe the electorate, his giving the money so long before being an intelligent anticipation of events. In either case we should be appealing to character, and judging the man by what of his character was known. Numerous instances of a like kind might be given, but in every case it would be found that we infer from an action a particular kind of motive, and that our judgment of the motive is determined by the character of the individual. This is so far the case that we are apt to mistrust our own judgment when we find a benevolent person doing what looks like a mean action, or a brave person committing what looks like an act of cowardice. While action is thus—so far as it is intentional—always the registration of motive, and motive the expression of a preponderating desire, the desire, whether it be licentious or chaste, noble or ignoble, is the outcome of character.

Determinism thus finds a fit and proper place for character in its philosophy of things. It does not say that the fact or the consideration of character is irrelevant ; on the contrary, it says it is all-important. And in saying this it challenges the position of the Indeterminist by the implication that it is only on lines of Determinism that character is important or that it can be profitably cultivated. For consider what is meant by saying that conduct implies and proceeds from character. It clearly implies that a man acts in this or that manner because he has been in the habit of acting in this or that manner. We do not gather grapes from thistles, and we do not

experience noble actions from a depraved character. The actions of each are determined by the character of each, and character is in turn the outcome of psychic inheritance, plus the effects of the interaction of organism and environment from the moment of birth onward. Personal characteristics, honesty, courage, truthfulness, loyalty, thus imply strictly determined qualities. They are qualities determined by the nature of the organism. They could not be expressed unless the surrounding circumstances were favourable to their expression; but neither could they be manifested unless the character was of a particular order. Conduct is, in fact, always a product of the two things.

Let us also note that it is this determination of qualities that is implied when we speak of a good or a bad, a strong or a weak character. We should not call a man a good character who to-day fed a starving child, and to-morrow kicked it from his doorstep. We should describe him as, at best, a person of an exceedingly variable disposition who satisfied the caprice of the moment irrespective of the feelings and needs of others. We should not call a person strong who withstood a temptation one hour and yielded to it the next. He would be described as weak, and lacking the compelling force of a stable disposition. It is also true that the moralization of character is the more complete as the determined nature of impulses is the more evident. Most people would not only resent the imputation of having committed a mean action, they would also resent the likelihood of their committing one. And in common speech, and in fact, the

highest tribute we can pay a man is to say that a certain kind of action is beneath him. We say that we know A would not have committed a theft, but we are quite willing to believe it of B. In each case we make no allowance for the operation of an undetermined will ; such doubts as we have being connected with our inability to completely analyze the character in question. But our prognostications are strictly based upon our knowledge of character and upon the conviction that given a certain character and the operation of particular motives, specific action follows with mathematical certainty.

And this, as has previously been pointed out, gives the only reliable basis for the cultivation of character. The whole aim of education, whether it be that received in the home, in the school, or the larger and more protracted education of social life, has the aim and purpose of securing the spontaneous response of a particular action to a particular stimulus, or on the negative side that certain circumstances shall not arouse desires of a socially unwelcome character. The phrase "Patriotism" thus serves to arouse a group of feelings that cluster round the state and social life. "Home" awakens its own groups of domestic and parental feelings. "Duty," again, covers a wider sphere, but involves the same process. By instruction and by training, certain conditions, circumstances, words, or associations are made to call up trains of connected feelings which, culminating in a desire, imperatively demand conduct along a given line. The more complete the education, the stronger the desire ; the stronger the desire, the more certain the action.



The more defective the education the less the certainty with which we can count upon specific conduct. The man who acts to-day in one way and to-morrow in another way is not a man of strong desires, so much as he is a man whose desires are undisciplined. The man who acts with uniform certainty is not a man of weak desire, but one whose desires run with strength and swiftness in a uniform direction. And it is a curious feature of indeterministic psychology that it should take as clear evidence of the subordination of desire to "will" the man whose desire is so strong as to preclude hesitation between it and action.

The whole of education, the whole of the discipline of life, is thus based upon the determination of conduct by circumstances and character. If the principle of cause and effect does not fully apply to conduct, all our training is so much waste of time. But it is because we cannot really think of the past not influencing the present, once we bring the two into relation, that we, Determinist and Indeterminist alike, proceed with our deterministic methods of training, and in this instance at least wisdom is justified of her children.

Finally, if the above be granted, can we longer attach meaning to the expression that man forms his own character? Well, if it means that a man has any share in his psychic endowments, or that they being what they are at any given time he could at that time act differently from the way in which he does act, the expression is meaningless. It is absolute nonsense. But in another sense it does convey an important truth. We must, however,

always bear in mind that in speaking of a man's character we are not dealing with two things, but with one thing. The character is the man, the man is the character. Or to be quite accurate, body and mind, physical and psychical qualities together, form the man, and any separation of these is for purposes of analysis and study only. If we say, then, that a man is master of his own character, or that a man may mould his own character, we do not imply the existence of an independent entity moulding or mastering something else. We are saying no more than that every experience carries its resultant into the sum of character. Action generates habit, and habit means a more or less permanent modification of character. What a man is, is the outcome of what he has been, and a perception of this truth no more conflicts with the principles of Determinism as above explained, than a stone being intercepted in its fall down the side of a hill by lodging against a tree is an infraction of the law of gravitation. In this sense, using figurative language, a man may be said to be master of himself. What he does proceeds from himself ; it is the expression of his character, and his doing cuts deeper the grooves of habit, and so makes more certain the performance of similar actions in the future. It is the fact of the motive springing from character which determines the act that makes the man its author. And the knowledge of this supplies him with, not alone the most powerful incentive towards the determination of his own character, but, what is equally important, the only method whereby to fashion the character of others.

## VIII.

### A PROBLEM IN DETERMINISM.

IF human feeling followed logical conviction the discussion of Determinism might, so far as the present writer is concerned, be considered as finished. Ultimately this doubtless occurs; but in the interim one has to reckon with the play of feeling, fashioned by long-standing conviction, upon convictions that are of recent origin. Thus it happens that many who realise the logical force of arguments similar to those hitherto advanced, find themselves in a state of fearfulness concerning the ultimate effect on human life of a convinced Determinism. The conflict between feeling and conviction that exists in their own minds they naturally ascribe to others, and endow it with a permanency which mature consideration might show to be unwarranted. It would indeed be strange and lamentable if the divorce between feeling and conviction—to adopt a popular classification—was not simply incidental to change, but was also an inextinguishable part of fundamental aspects of human life.

Mr. A. J. Balfour has indeed gone so far as to suggest,\* as a theory to meet this phenomenon, that

*\*International Journal of Ethics, vol. iv. pp. 421-422.*

the immediate consciousness of our actions being determined would be so paralyzing to action, that Nature has by "a process of selective slaughter" made a consciousness of this character a practical impossibility. But it would seem that the fact of a consciousness of determination developing at all affords strong presumptions in favour of the belief that no such selective slaughter is really necessary to the maintenance of vital social relations. Mr. Balfour's argument might have some weight against Fatalism, which says that what is to be will be in despite of all that may be done to prevent its occurrence; but we are on different ground with a theory which makes what *I* do part of the sequence that issues in a particular result.

The problem is put very plainly in the following two quotations. The first is from a private source, written by one who fears the consequences of Determinism on conduct. The writer says:—

"In a moral crisis, and with the consciousness of a strong tendency in the direction of what is felt to be wrong, is there no danger of this desire gaining further strength and becoming the predominant feeling by accepting Determinism, causing a weakened sense of responsibility, besides providing a convenient excuse for giving way to the lower instead of the higher? Thus in a question of alternatives is it not conceivable that by dwelling on this thought, the agent is resisting possibilities which might otherwise have a different effect had Determinism no advocacy and with a different

competitive factor to oppose? This, it seems to me, is what the Indeterminist fears, and I think it must be admitted not without some reason."

The second comes from Mr. F. W. Headley's work, *Life and Evolution*. Mr. Headley, after discussing the evolution of mind, and after admitting the impregnable nature of the determinist position, says that notwithstanding the evidence to the contrary we cannot help cherishing the belief that we are in some sense "free," and adds:—

"For practical purposes what is wanted is not free-will but a working belief in it. When the time for decision and for action comes, a man must feel that he is free to choose or he is lost. And this working belief in free-will, even though the thing itself be proved to be a phantom and an illusion, is the inalienable property of every healthy man."

Both these criticisms might be met by the method of analysing the use made of certain leading words. For example, the Determinist would quite agree that for conduct to be fruitful a man must feel that he is free to choose. But unless his freedom consists in liberty to obey the dictates of his real nature, the term is without significance. The fact of choice, as has been pointed out, is common ground for both Determinist and Indeterminist. The real question is whether the choice itself is determined or not. What a man needs to feel is that his choice is

decisive, and that it is based upon an impartial review of the alternatives as they appear to him. Determinism makes full allowance for this ; it is Indeterminism which in denying the application of causality to the will substantially asserts that the whole training of a lifetime may be counteracted by the decision of an uncaused will, and so renders the whole process unintelligible. And as to Determinism causing a weakened sense of responsibility, surely one may fairly argue that the consciousness of the cumulative force of practice may well serve to warn us against yielding to a vicious propensity, and so strengthen the feeling of resistance to it. There could hardly be conceived a stronger incentive to right action, or to struggle against unwholesome desires, than this conviction. Moreover, the practical testimony of those who are convinced Determinists is all in this direction. The fears are expressed by those whose advocacy of Determinism is at best of but a lukewarm description.

But in order that the full weight of the difficulty may be realized let us put the matter in a still more forcible form. Determinism, it is to be remembered, is an attempt to apply to mind and morals that principle of causation which is of universal application in the physical world, and where it has proved itself so fruitful and suggestive. On this principle all that is flows from all that has been in such a way that, given a complete knowledge of the capacities of all the forces in operation at any one time, the world a century hence could be predicted with mathematical accuracy. So likewise with human nature. Human conduct being due to the



interaction of organism with environment, our inability to say what a person will do under given circumstances is no more than an expression of our ignorance of the quantitative and qualitative value of the forces operating. The possibilities of action are co-extensive with the actualities of ignorance. There is no break in the working of causation, no matter what the sphere of existence with which we happen to be dealing.

It is at this point that Determinism lands one in what is apparently an ethical *cul-de-sac*. If all that is, is the necessary result of all that has been, if nothing different from what does occur could occur, what is the meaning of the sense of power over circumstances that we possess? And why urge people to make an effort in this or that direction if everything, including the effort or its absence, is determined? I may flatter myself with the notion that things are better because of some action of mine. But beyond the mere fact that my action is part of the stream of causation, all else is a trick of the imagination. My conduct is, all the time, the result of the co-operation of past conditions with present circumstances. To say that praise or blame of other people's conduct, or approval or disapproval of my own conduct, is itself a determinative force, hardly meets the point. For these, too, are part of the determined order.

It might be urged that the knowledge that by exciting certain feelings others are proportionately weakened operates in the direction of improvement. Quite so; and as a mere description of what occurs the statement is correct. But to the Determinist

there is no "I" that determines which feeling or cluster of feelings shall predominate. "I" am the expression of the succession and co-ordination of mental states ; we are still within a closed circle of causation. Whether I am good or bad, wise or unwise, I shall be what I must be, and nothing else ; do as I must do, and no more.

This is, I think, putting the Indeterminists' case as strongly as it can be put. How is the Determinist to meet the attack? A common retort is that all this being granted things remain as they were. If the criminal action is determined so is that of the judge, and so no harm is done. We shall go on praising or blaming, punishing or rewarding, doing or not doing, exactly as before, simply because we cannot do otherwise. This, however, while effective as a mere retort, is not very satisfactory as an answer. For it neither explains the sense of power people feel they possess, nor does it meet the criticism raised. On the one hand there is the fact that character does undergo modification, and the conviction that *my* effort does play a part in securing that modification. And with this there goes the feeling—with some—that if everything, mental states and dispositions included, is part of an unbroken and unbreakable order, why delude ourselves with the notion of personal power? Why not let things drift? And on the other hand there is the conviction that scientific Determinism holds the field. The state of mind is there, and it is fairly expressed in the two quotations already given ; particularly in Mr. Headley's statement that we ought to act as though Free-Will were a fact, even though

we know it to be otherwise. The difficulty is there, and one must admit that it is not always fairly faced by writers on Determinism. An appeal is made to man's moral sense, and this, while legitimate enough in some connections, is quite irrelevant in this. Or it is said that a knowledge of the causational nature of morals should place people on their guard against encouraging harmful states of mind. This is also good counsel, but it clearly does not touch the point that, whether I encourage harmful or beneficial states of mind, it is all part of the determined order of things.

As an example of what has been said we may take a passage from John Stuart Mill. In his criticism of Sir William Hamilton, Mill remarks:—

"The true doctrine of the causation of human actions maintains . . . that not only our conduct, but our character, is, in part, amenable to our will; that we can by employing the proper means, improve our character; and that if our character is such that while it remains what it is, it necessitates us to do wrong, it will be just to apply motives which will necessitate us to strive for its improvement, and so emancipate ourselves from the other necessity; in other words, we are under a moral obligation to seek the improvement of our moral character."

Admirable as is this passage it is clearly no reply to the criticism that whether we seek moral improvement or not, either course is as much necessitated as

is the character that needs improving. To give a real relevance to this passage we should have to assume the existence of an ego outside the stream of causation deciding at what precise point it should exert a determining influence. That so clear a thinker as Mill should have overlooked this gives point to what has been said as to writers on Determinism having failed to squarely face the issue.

A more valid reply to Mr. Headley's position would be that so long as we believe a theory to be sound there is no real gain in acting as though we were convinced otherwise. Granting that an illusion may have its uses, it can only be of service so long as we do not know it to be an illusion. A mirage of cool trees and sparkling pools may inspire tired travellers in a desert to renewed efforts of locomotion. But if they *know* it to be a mirage it only serves to discourage effort. And once we believe in Determinism, our right course, and our only profitable course, is to face all the issues as courageously as may be. Not that a correct reading of Determinism leads to our sitting with folded hands lacking the spirit to strive for better things.

It may be that certain people so read Determinism, but one cannot reasonably hold a theory responsible for every misreading of it that exists. Theologians in particular would be in a very uncomfortable position if this rule were adopted. A theory is responsible for such conclusions or consequences as are logically deducible therefrom, but no more. And what we are now concerned with is, first, will Determinism, properly understood, really have the effect

feared ; and, second, is it possible for Determinism to account adequately for the belief that it is possible to modify other people's character, and in so doing modify our own? In Mill's words, can we exchange the necessity to do wrong for the necessity to do right? I believe that a satisfactory reply can be given to both questions

In the first place we have to get rid of the overpowering influence of an atomistic psychology. A very little study of works on psychology—particularly of the more orthodox schools—is enough to show that the social medium as a factor determining man's mental nature has been either ignored, or given a quite subordinate position. Because in studying the mental qualities of man we are necessarily dealing with an individual brain, it has been assumed that mental phenomena may be explained with no more than a casual reference to anything beyond the individual organism. This assumption may be sound so long as we are dealing with mind as the function of definitely localized organs, or if we are merely describing mental phenomena. It is when we pass to the contents of the mind, and study the significance of mental states, or enquire how they came into existence, that we find the atomistic psychology breaking down, and we find ourselves compelled to deal with mind as a psycho-sociologic phenomenon, with its relation to the social medium. Then we discover that it is man's social relationships, the innumerable generations of reaction between individual organisms and the social medium, which supply the key to problems that are otherwise insoluble.

It has already been pointed out that the whole significance of morality is social. If we restrict ourselves to the individual no adequate explanation can be given of such qualities as sympathy, honesty, truthfulness, chastity, kindness, etc. Separate it in thought from the social medium and morality becomes meaningless. Properly studied, psychology yields much the same result. When we get beyond the apprehension of such fundamental qualities as time and space, heat and cold, colour and sound, the contour of man's mind, so to speak, is a social product. His feelings and impulses imply a social medium as surely as does morality. From this point of view the phrase "Social sense" is no mere figure of speech; it is the expression of a pregnant truth, the statement of something as real as any scientific law with which we are acquainted.

For the essence of a scientific law is the expression of a relation. The law of gravitation, for instance, formulates the relations existing between particles of matter. If there existed but one particle of matter in the universe gravitation would be a meaningless term. Introduce a second particle, and a relation is established between the two, and the material for a scientific "law" created. In the same way a description of individual human qualities is fundamentally a statement of the relations existing between individuals living in groups; and any attempt to understand human nature without considering these relations is as certainly foredoomed to failure as would be the attempt to study a particle of matter apart from the operation of all known forces. The individual as he exists to-day



is not something that exists apart from the social forces ; he is an expression, an epitome, of all their past and present operations. The really essential thing in the study of human nature is not so much the discrete individual A or B, but the relations existing between A and B. It is these which make each end of the term what it is—determines the individual's language, feelings, thoughts, and character.

It is along these lines that we have to look for an explanation of the feeling that we can initiate a reform in character, and of a sense of power in determining events. We start with a sense of power over the course of events—which is interpreted as the equivalent of our ability to initiate absolutely a change in our own character or in that of others. But a little reflection convinces us—particularly if we call ourselves Determinists—that this interpretation is quite erroneous. An absolute beginning is no more conceivable in the mental or moral sphere than it is in the physical world. The sum of all that is is the product of all that has been, and in this, desires, feelings, dispositions are included no less than physical properties. Now, curiously enough, the conviction that an absolute change in character can be initiated exists with much greater strength in regard to oneself than it does with regard to others. It is easier to observe others than to analyze one's own mental states, with the result that most people can more readily realize that what others do is the product of their heredity and their environment than they can realize it in their own case. Of course,

reflection shows that the same principle applies in both directions, but we are here dealing with moods rather than with carefully reasoned out convictions. And, generally speaking, while we *feel* ourselves masters of our own fate, we only suspect a similar strength in others. But each one realizes, and with increasing vividness, the power he possesses in modifying other people's character by a change of circumstances. We see this illustrated by the increased emphasis placed upon the importance of better sanitation, better housing, better conditions of labour, and of an improved education. More from observing others than by studying ourselves we see how modifiable a thing human nature is. We see how character is modified by an alteration of the material environment, and we also note our own individual function as a determinative influence in effecting this modification.

Now I quite fail to see that there is in this sense of power over circumstances anything more than a recognition of our own efforts as part of the determinative sequence. The added factor to the general causative series is the consciousness of man himself. We are conscious, more or less clearly, of our place in the sequence; we are able to recognize and study our relations to past and present events, and our probable relation to future ones. We see ourselves as so many efficient causes of those social reactions that go to make up a science of sociology, and it is this which gives us a sense of *power* of determining events. I say "power" because "freedom" is an altogether different thing. The question of whether we are

free to determine events is, as I have shown, meaningless when applied to scientific matters. But the question of whether or not we have the *power* of determining events may be answered in the affirmative—an answer not in the least affected by the belief that this power is strictly conditioned by past and present circumstances. The sense of power is real, and it expresses a fact, even though the fact be an inevitable one. We are all shapers of each other's character, moulders of each other's destiny. The recognition of our power to act in this relation is not contrary to Determinism, Determinism implies it. It is this which gives a real meaning to the expression "social sense." For the social sense can have no other meaning or value than as a recognition of the action of one individual upon another, which, as in the case of a chemical compound, results in the production of something that is not given by the mere sum of individual qualities.

So, too, do we get by this method a higher meaning to the word "freedom." In an earlier part of this essay it was pointed out that "freedom" was of social origin and application. Its essential meaning is liberty to carry out the impulses of one's nature unrestricted by the coercive action of one's fellows. But there is a higher and a more positive meaning than this. Man is a social animal; his character is a social product. The purely human qualities not only lose their value when divorced from social relationships, it is these relationships that provide the only medium for their activity. To say that a person

is free to express moral qualities in the absence of his fellows is meaningless, since it is only in their presence that the manifestation of them is possible. It is the intercourse of man with man that gives to each whatever freedom he possesses. The restraints imposed upon each member of a society in the interests of all are not a curtailing of human freedom but the condition of its realization. To chafe against them is, to use Kant's famous illustration, as unreasonable as a bird's revolt against the opposing medium or atmosphere, in ignorance of the fact that it is this opposition which makes flight possible. The only genuine freedom that man can know and enjoy is that provided by social life. Human freedom has its origin in social relationships, and to these we are ultimately driven to discover its meaning and significance.

So far, then, the sense of power in controlling events which each possesses presents no insuperable difficulty to a theory of Determinism. Only one other point remains on which to say a word, and that is whether a conviction of the causative character of human action would lead to a weakening of effort or to moral depression. Why should it have this effect? It is curious that those who fear this result seem to have only in mind the tendencies to wrongdoing. But if it operates at all it must operate in all directions, and this would certainly strengthen good resolutions as well as bad ones. And even though no more were to be said, this would justify the assertion that merit and demerit would remain unaffected, and that any harm done in one direction would be compensated

by good done in another. But another important consideration is to be added. This is that while a consciousness of the power of habit acts as a retarding influence on wrongdoing, it has an accelerating influence in the reverse direction—that is, unless we assume a character acting with the deliberate intention of cultivating an evil disposition. Besides, the really vicious characters are not usually given to reflecting upon the origin and nature of their desires, and are therefore quite unaffected by any theory of volition; while those who are given to such reflection are not usually of a vicious disposition. We are really crediting the vicious with a degree of intelligence and reflective power quite unwarranted by the facts of the case.

Finally, the criticism with which I have been dealing takes a too purely intellectual view of conduct. It does not allow for the operation of sympathy, or for the power of social reaction. And these are not only real, they are of vital importance when we are dealing with human nature. For man cannot, even if he would, remain purely passive. The power of sympathy, the desire for social intercourse, the invincible feeling that in some way he is vitally concerned with the well-being of the society to which he belongs, these are always in operation, even though their degree of intensity varies with different individuals. We cannot possibly isolate man in considering conduct, because his whole nature has been moulded by social intercourse, and craves continuously for social approval. And it is such feelings that are powerful agents in the immediate determination of conduct. The

mental perception of the causes and conditions of conduct are feeble by comparison and can only operate with relative slowness. And in their operation they are all the time checked and modified by the fundamental requirements of the social structure.

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## IX.

### ENVIRONMENT.

IN the course of the foregoing pages we have made frequent reference to "environment," without the word being precisely described or defined. The subject was of too great importance to be dismissed with a bald definition, and to have dealt with it earlier at suitable length might have diverted attention from the main argument. But so much turns on a correct understanding of the word "environment" that a discussion of Determinism would be incomplete that failed to fix its meaning with a fair degree of accuracy.

A very casual study of anti-deterministic literature is enough to show that a great deal of the opposition to a scientific interpretation of human conduct has its origin in a quite wrong conception of what the determinist has in mind when he speaks of the part played by the environment in the determination of conduct. Even writings ostensibly deterministic in aim have not been free from blame in their use of the word. Thus on the one hand we find it said that man is a creature of his environment, and by "environment" we are to understand, by implication, only the material forces, which are assumed to somehow drive man hither and thither in much the same way as a tennis ball is driven this way or that by the player.

Against this there has been a natural and, let it be said, a justifiable reaction. Expressed in this way it was felt that man was not at the mercy of his surroundings. It was felt that, whatever be its nature the organism does exert some influence over environmental forces, and that it is not a merely passive register of their operations. Neither of these views expresses the whole truth. It may be that each expresses *a* truth, and it is still more probable, as is the case with some terms already examined, that the confusion arises from a mis-use of the language employed.

To-day we are all familiar with the dictum that the maintenance of life is a question of adaptation to environment—a truth that is equally applicable to ideas and institutions. But the general truth admitted, there is next required a consideration of its application to the particular subject in hand, and in connection with our present topic some attention must be paid both to the nature of the organism and of the environment with which we are dealing. We then discover that not alone are we dealing with an organism which is extremely plastic in its nature, but that the environment may also vary within very wide limits. On the one side, and in relation to man, we may be dealing with an environment that is mainly physical in character, or it may be a combination of physical conditions and biological forces, or, yet again, it may be predominantly psychological in its nature. And, on the other hand, the reaction of the organism on the environment may vary from extreme feebleness to an almost overpowering determination. We may,

indeed, anticipate our argument by saying that one of the chief features of human progress is the gradual subordination of the material environment to the psychologic powers of man.

If, now, we contrast the environment of an uncivilized with that of a civilized people the difference is striking. The environment of an uncivilized race will consist of the immediate physical surroundings, the animals that are hunted for sport or killed for food, and a comparatively meagre stock of customs and traditions. The environment of a modern European will add to the physical surroundings an enormously enlarged mass of social traditions and customs, an extensive literature, contact with numerous other societies in various stages of culture, and relations, more or less obscure, to a vast literary and social past. The environment thus includes not merely the living, but also the dead. Roman law, Greek philosophy, Eastern religious ideas, etc., all affect the twentieth century European. It would require a lengthy essay to enumerate all the influences that dominate the life of a particular people of to-day, but enough has been said to illustrate the truth that we must use the term "environment" so as to include *all* that affects the organism. And when this is done it soon becomes clear that by the very growth of humanity the influence of the physical portion of the environment becomes of relatively less importance with the progress of the race—it is the subordination of the physical environment that is the principal condition of the advance of civilization.

But even when our conception of the meaning of environment has been thus enlarged, we need to be on our guard against misconception from another side. For the environment is only one factor in the problem; the organism is another, and the relative importance of the two is a matter of vital significance. We may still make the mistake of treating the environment as active and the organism as passive. This would be a similar mistake to that which is made when morality and religion are treated as being no more than a reflection of economic conditions. The action of the environment is given a place of first importance, while the reaction of the organism on its environment is treated as a negligible quantity. Historically this may be taken as a reaction against the extreme spiritualistic view which, in upholding, a theory of Free-Will made no allowance for the influence of the surroundings. An extreme view in one direction usually sets up an extreme view by way of opposition, and it must be confessed that in social philosophy the power of the environment has often been made omnipotent. The medium has been presented as active and the organism as passive. Different results occur because the susceptibilities of organisms vary. Good or bad influences affect individuals differently for much the same reason that soils differ in their capacity for absorbing water.

From the scientific and the philosophic side this conception derived a certain adventitious strength. In the first place there was the now generally discarded psychology which taught that the individual

mind was as a sheet of blank paper on which experience inscribed its lessons. And in the second place the growth of biological science brought out with great distinctness the influence of the environment on organic life. It was very plain that the quality and quantity of the food supply, the action of air and light, and other purely environmental forces exercised an important influence. In the plant world it was seen how much could be effected by a mere change of habitat. In the animal world markings and structure seemed to have an obvious reference to the nature of the environment. It, therefore, seemed nothing but a logical inference to extend the same reasoning to man, and treat not only his structure but his mental capacities as being the outcome of the same kind of correspondence.

But a too rigid application of biological principles lands one in error. Society is more than a mere biological group, and no reasoning that proceeds on the assumption that it is no more than that can avoid confusion. And we certainly cannot square the facts with a theory which treats the human organism as passive under the operation of environmental forces. The conviction that man plays a positive part in life is general, powerful, and, I think, justifiable. But if what *I* do is at any time the product of the environmental forces, physical and other, there does not seem any room for *me* as an active participant. And the facts seem to demand that the individual should appear in some capacity other than that of representing the total in an environmental calculation. This would leave

man with no other function than that of a billiard ball pushed over a table by rival players. Given the force exerted by the player, added to the size, weight, and position of the ball, and the product of the combination gives us the correct answer. But this kind of calculation will not do in the case of man. Here we must allow, in addition to external influences, the positive action of man on his surroundings. The conception of the organism as a plexus of forces capable of this reaction is, indeed, vital to our conception of a living being. Granted that in either case, that of the billiard ball and that of the man, the result expresses the exact sum of all the forces acting at the time, there still remains an important distinction in the two cases. Whether the billiard ball is struck by a professional player or by an amateur, provided it be struck in a particular way the result is in both cases identical. An identity of result is produced by an identity of external conditions.

With the human organism—with, in fact, any organism—this rule does not apply. In any two cases the external factors may be identical, but the results may be entirely different. A temptation that leaves one unaffected may prove overpowering with another. Exactly the same conditions of food, occupation, residence, and social position may co-exist with entirely different effects on the organism. These differences will be manifested from the earliest years and are a direct consequence of the positive reaction of the organism on its environment, a reaction that is more profound in the case of man than in that of any other animal.



To put the matter briefly. In the case of the billiard player the ball remains a constant factor in a problem in which external conditions represent a variant. In the case of man and his environment we are dealing with two sets of factors, neither of which is constant and one of which—the human one—varies enormously. And the reaction of man on his environment becomes so great as to result in its practical transformation.

It may, of course, be urged that all this is covered and allowed for by heredity. This may be so, but I am arguing against those who while recognizing heredity fail to make adequate allowance for its operations. Or it may be said that "environment" covers all forces, including heredity. But in that case the distinction between organism and environment is useless—in fact, it disappears. If, however, the distinction between the two is retained, our theorizing must give full appreciation to both. And in that case we must not fail to allow for the transforming power of man over his surroundings. Nor must we overlook another and a very vital fact, that in a large measure the environment to which civilised mankind must adapt itself is largely a thing of human creation.

Viewed as merely external circumstances, the physical environment of man remains constant. At any rate, such changes as do take place occur with such slowness that for generations we may safely deal with them as unchanged. The dissipation of the heat of the earth may be a fact, but no one takes this into account in dealing with the probabilities of human life during the next few generations. On the

other hand, the organism represents the cumulative, and consequently, ever-changing power of human nature, and it is this that gives us the central fact of human civilization. Whether acquired characters be inherited or not may be still an open question, but in any case there is no denying that capacity is heritable, and natural selection will move along the line of favouring the survival of that capacity which is most serviceable. And how does increasing capacity express itself? It can do so only in the direction of giving man a greater ability to control and mould to his own uses the material environment in which he is placed. Looking at the course of social evolution, we see this increased and increasing capacity expressed in art, industries, inventions, etc., all of which mean in effect a transformation of the material surroundings and their subjugation to the needs of man. These inventions, etc., not only involve a transformation of the existing environment; they also mean the creating of a new environment for succeeding generations. Each mechanical invention, for example, is dependent upon the inventions and discoveries that have preceded it, and to that extent it is dependent upon the environment. But each invention places a new power in the hands of man, and so enables him to still further modify and control his surroundings. Human heredity is thus expressed in capacity as represented by a definite organic structure. This is one factor in the phenomenon of social evolution. The other factor is the environment in which the organism is placed and to which it responds. The two factors, organism and environment, remain

constant throughout the animal world. It is when we come to deal with human society specifically, that we find a radical change in the nature of the environment to be considered. Granted that some influence must always be exerted by the purely material conditions, the fact remains that they become relatively less powerful with the advance of civilization. The development of agriculture, the invention of weapons and tools, the discovery of the nature of natural forces, all help to give the developing human a greater measure of control over both the physical and organic portion of his environment, and to manifest a measure of independence concerning them.

But the supreme and peculiar feature of human society is the creation of a new medium to which the individual must adapt himself. By means of language and writing the knowledge and experience gained by one generation are transmitted to its successors. The human intellect elaborates definite theories concerning the universe of which it forms a part. These theories and beliefs form and fashion institutions that are transmitted from generation to generation. Language stereotypes tradition and slowly creates a literature. In this way a new medium is created which is psychological in character, and ultimately dominates life.

When a dog is about to rest it often tramps round and round the spot on which it is to recline. Naturalists explain this as the survival of an instinct which in the wild dog served the useful function of guarding it against the presence of harmful creatures hidden in the grass. The domesticated

dog is here exhibiting an instinct that belongs to a past condition of life. But man has few instincts—fewer perhaps than any other animal. In their stead he has a greater plasticity of nature, and a more educable intelligence. And it is in the exercise of this educable organization that the psychological medium as expressed in art, literature, and inventions, plays its part for good and ill. So soon as he is able to understand, the individual finds himself surrounded by ideas concerning home, the State, the monarchy, the Church, and a thousand and one other things. He is brought into relation with a vast literature, and also with the play of myriads of minds similar to his own. Henceforth, it is this environment with which he has chiefly to reckon in terms of either harmony or conflict. He can no more escape it than he can dispense with the atmosphere. It is part and parcel of himself. Without it he ceases to be himself; for if we cut away from man all that this psychological heredity gives him he ceases to be man as we understand the term. He becomes a mere animated object.

Finally, we have to note that this psychological environment is cumulative in character as being is all powerful in its influence. By its own unceasing activity humanity is continually triumphing over the difficulties of its material environment and adding to the complexity and power of its mental one. Inevitably the environment thus becomes more psychic in character and more powerful in its operations. We may overcome the difficulties of climate, poor soil, geographical position, etc., but it is impossible to ignore the great and growing

pressure of this past mental life of the race. It defies all attempts at material coercion, and gradually transforms a material medium into what is substantially a psychological one. Man cannot escape the domination of his own mental life. Its unfettered exercise supplies the only freedom he is capable of realising, as it constitutes the source of his influence as a link in the causative process of determining his own destiny and moulding that of his successors.

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